

Interview with Robert W. Drexler

The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training Foreign Affairs Oral History Project

ROBERT W. DREXLER

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Q: Today is March 1, 1996. This is an interview with Robert W. Drexler. I wonder if we could start off by telling me when and where you were born, and a little about your family and its background?

DREXLER: I was born in Milwaukee, Wisconsin in 1931. My father was in business there, and I attended high school in Milwaukee. It was there, I suppose, that I first became interested in the Foreign Service, and at the time Milwaukee, which was sometimes called the Munich of America, despite being a Midwestern city and rather insular, I suppose, nonetheless had a strong European influence, particularly German. There was a German theater, German was taught in the public schools, and my father's family was of German descent.

Q: Had they been there long?

DREXLER: My great-grandfather immigrated from Germany and settled in Wisconsin, and began life as a farmer. We understood that he came to the US in order to avoid service in the Kaiser's army, but once he got to the United States and away from that threat, he became a deep admirer of Kaiser Wilhelm. He kept pictures of the Kaiser around his house and when a convoy of army vehicles during the First World War stopped at his farm

Library of Congress

and asked for water, which my great-grandfather provided, he chatted with the men and asked where they were going. And they said they were going off to whip the Kaiser, which led him to drive them off the property.

I went off to Harvard College in 1949, and my father's business friends thought this was a very bad idea, because of what they regarded as the Communist "infiltration" of Harvard. Nonetheless, I went off with the intention of going into the law school. But the Korean War broke out about that time, June 1950, and there was a system of deferment for college students during that period, which you qualified for by taking an exam, as I remember, to show that you weren't absolutely stupid or hopeless in your studies. But immediately upon getting my Bachelor's degree, I was drafted. In fact, no sooner did I return home from the Commencement then I was called up.

Q: You were drafted in 1953?

DREXLER: Yes. And I was sent to Germany with the 1st Infantry Division, the Army of Occupation, which of course appealed to me for the reasons that I described to you: German background, German connection. And I was in the Army a little less than two years. I traveled around Europe as much as I could.

Q: What were you doing in the Army?

DREXLER: I was an enlisted man, a Corporal finally, in an intelligence and reconnaissance platoon of the 1st Infantry Division, the Big Red One. When I came back, I had some odd jobs in Milwaukee, but was interested then in joining the Foreign Service. I took the exam, and was admitted in 1956, about nine months after I left the Army.

Q: I wonder if you could talk a little about the oral exam when you took it in 1956.

DREXLER: For the oral exam, we had to go to Chicago. I was examined by a panel of three gentlemen. And I recall it as a paralyzing experience. I felt absolutely incapable of

Library of Congress

picking up a glass a water which was put there to help my dry throat. I remember being examined by them for two or three hours, perhaps more, and since I later became head of the Board of Examiners myself, I of course have a strong sense of how different it had become from at that time. Very detailed questions, particularly about European history were put to me. I was asked long questions about Metternich, about Bismarck, and one of the gentlemen quizzed me about the war between Prussia and Denmark in Bismarck's time. And as I was going on and on, talking about the war, which I said took place in Silesia, I realized with horror that I meant to say Schleswig, or Schleswig-Holstein. And so I sort of raised my hand, and said, "Sir, I would like to correct what I said before. It wasn't Silesia, it was Schleswig-Holstein." And I have a vivid memory of them looking down at their papers and erasing their notations of an error that was obviously going to count against me. Of course it would be preposterous to ask that question nowadays. It wouldn't be service-related.

So I was asked more questions about American history and so on, and then asked to wait in the lounge. Nowadays of course, or at least when I was in charge in BEX, the oral examiners are absolutely poker faced. The candidates leave the oral exam now, without knowing if they passed or failed, unless they had obviously done something stupid or lost control. But then we were told right away. And after I think only about half an hour, I was called in. The Chairman of the group told me that I was just on the borderline; I shouldn't think I had done very well at all. And he mentioned those points of my background knowledge, I remember, something about George Washington's career, which were obviously deficient, and which I should seek to remedy, if not beginning that afternoon, at least very soon, if I expected to have any career in the Foreign Service. So that was my memory of the oral exam.

Q: I was told to do something about my economics — Cromwell Riches called me, a very distinguished gentleman. It was an intimidating experience.

Library of Congress

DREXLER: Yes. As I said, when I later took over BEX, I was naturally struck by the fact that we did things quite differently from then, and I think much better. I certainly wouldn't defend the older system; I don't think you would either.

Q: You came in 1956. You started with a class, I assume.

DREXLER: Yes, there were about 40 of us in the class. Perhaps four women, no minorities.

Q: Do you have a feel for how you all were looking at this as a job, and then sort of the role of the Foreign Service, as you came in?

DREXLER: Well, first of all, I remember one thing, that it was largely a male class, 36 or more men. And we were all veterans. We'd all served either in the Korean War, or the Second World War, and sometimes in both. And I recall that as one of the most binding or bonding influences at that time. And since we were fresh from military service, the impact that the military necessarily and unavoidably has on one's mindset or way of doing things, or the sense of self-discipline maybe — I thought that was very apparent in all of us. Not just the khaki trousers that we wore. And so I think we were all prepared to enter into what we felt was one more disciplined service. Here was a service which had ranks, which we were accustomed to. In those days I think you started at 06, but just before I came in they lowered it to 08. So we felt we were entering a structured organization, and I think most of us expected that this was going to be our career. Certainly we didn't have the attitude which I became familiar with, when I was head of PER/REE of persons coming in rather later in life, and perhaps for a limited period of time, not exactly to flesh out their resume, but more seriously to gain the experience which might fit them for some other career. That was not our orientation. I think we felt we were going to stay. Many of us had served overseas, and so found in the service an attraction there, you know, back to foreign lands again.

Library of Congress

I think that one thing that impressed us was that the Department, in a physical sense, didn't quite live up to our expectations. That was the day when the State Department was in what is now the old building, originally the War Department building, and everything else was scattered all around in small apartment buildings in the neighborhood, some of which still stand, and have been taken over now by George Washington University. To go to the Medical Department, you had to go up to 801 19th Street, and it all seemed to be rather scattered and disorganized. I think that came as somewhat of a disappointment. This was compensated for, though, by the very good training class. I'm sure it wasn't as perfected or sophisticated or advanced as it has since become. But we benefitted from the man who was in charge of it. This was Jan Nadelman, the son of the sculptor, who impressed us in many respects. First of all, he seemed to be a quintessential Foreign Service officer. You probably know him, too.

Q: I went through his training too, in July 1955.

DREXLER: We admired his attitude — he didn't take himself too seriously, but he was obviously worth taking seriously by us. I give him very high marks for his performance at a time when, as I said, these things were not so perfected. We were sworn in by Loy Henderson, whom we knew about. He was one of the grand men of the Service in those days. We all got assignments that I think enthused us, excited us, and in some cases, as in mine, they were to places we'd never heard of before. There were a great many posts in that era, as you know. We had many Consulates around the world, and most of us, of course, went off to do Consular assignments. And we were prepared for that. I thought we had excellent training in the Consular field by Frank Auerbach, who at that time...

Q: He'd written the visa law.

DREXLER: And that was our textbook. But he supplemented it by his lectures, by his style, and we all found this superb preparation for the work that we were doing. Certainly I did in Barranquilla, which was my first post in Colombia, because I became the sole visa officer

Library of Congress

then. And without Auerbach's course and his textbook, which of course I always had at my desk, I wouldn't have done well at all. So it was a very positive, even inspiring experience.

Q: Just a question though. This was a time when John Foster Dulles was the Secretary of State. When I came in, maybe there was still some aftermath of the McCarthy period, and the fact that John Foster Dulles, when he came in in 1953, had made the statement that he wanted positive loyalty, and all that. Our opinion was, the Foreign Service is great, but this guy Dulles — we weren't really very comfortable, I think.

DREXLER: In my group, he was not much talked about. I recall I came in just about the time of the Suez crisis. I recall lots of diplomatic scurrying and the British Ambassador standing outside, and trying to deal, poor man, with press inquiries as the situation worsened. Most of the members of my class were liberals, left liberals I would say, certainly including myself. Dulles call for “positive loyalty” is indelible in my memory, but that was not a common topic of conversation in our group, and Dulles was not someone talked about. I think for part of that time he was ill too, and I know my passport was signed by Herbert Hoover, Jr. And so Dulles didn't loom very large in our minds or perspective at that time, although we had every reason to dislike him, if we thought about it.

Q: Great foreign policy issues: can you give us a view of that time, how we looked at the Soviet Union?

DREXLER: My view of the Soviet Union was colored by my Army service, because I was assigned to a regiment just across from the Czech border, at one of the gaps through which the Red Army was supposed to pass when it unleashed the Third World War. The US Army had a rather crude political training program for us. I forget what it was called. It involved young officers coming before the troops and impressing upon us the near and present danger of a Soviet attack, lest we spend too much time in the beer gardens and the museums, and not remember that the Soviets were just down the road, literally. And after a while this had a rather counterproductive effect, particularly on

Library of Congress

those of us who were college graduates and felt that the presentation was not really very effective. So, I think that colored my attitude toward the Soviet threat. My own parents were strongly opposed to Senator McCarthy, and all he stood for, the red scare and whatnot in Wisconsin, as were many. Because Milwaukee, where I came from, has always been a Democratic stronghold. It had a Socialist mayor for 25 years, though of course he didn't nationalize anything. I think I was probably on guard against the most extreme portrayals of the Soviet threat, for the reasons I've just described. But my interest really was more in Asia, and things Chinese. It had started at college, almost by accident. When Professor John Fairbanks was denied permission to go to Japan to teach a course or something by the Army, which felt that he was of dubious political allegiance, he stayed behind at Harvard, and with Professor Reischauer gave one of the pioneering courses in Asian history, which was very popular and celebrated, and which I took. And then I started Chinese language studies there. And of course at that time it was felt that the Korean War was Chinese in inspiration, and of course, it became Chinese in participation very quickly. And Asia and the Chinese were really my chief interest. And so while I was a little disappointed to go off in the other direction, I soon got back on the right track.

Q: I'm just curious, because I can't help but compare my own feeling. How did you feel, what were you getting from these courses you were taking, about Communist China. China fell in 1948, and we had non-relations until 1974. But when you came in, how did you feel about relations with China?

DREXLER: I had a very dark and dim view of China as a Communist state, and I was favorably inclined to the Nationalists at that time. I don't recall this ever really coming up in my college studies of China, because of course Fairbanks and Reischauer had to steer away from that sort of topic, but more important, their course was a backward-looking one, it was historical and cultural. I soon became caught up in this problem, though. I went to Barranquilla, stayed there about 18 months, and then came right back to Chinese language school. So I was back in FSI rather soon. And there we found people like John Stewart Service, people who had been purged from the China corps. Service, I remember,

Library of Congress

was studying German at that time. And there were others around like Service, such as John Paton Davies, Jr, and it was made clear to us that these were people with whom we should not associate. Perhaps I'm going too far ahead now, but I recall when we were in our Chinese language training, we had asked if we could meet with John Stewart Service, and hear about some of his experiences in China. And we were told this would require a special decision by the Dean of the school, who at that time was Harold Hoskins. The permission was denied. We were told we could not meet with John Stewart Service. He was still an officer, you know. So we were appalled by that, and were beginning to have fresh thoughts about the China problem.

We met with him secretly, in his flat, his apartment in Arlington, where we sat around and listened to him, enthralled by his account of his experiences. And I remember when we left, he said, "Good luck boys, but be careful." And we were careful, subsequently. For example, there was a meeting of the Association of Asian Studies, at a downtown hotel, around that time and Davies was there, with some of the other purged old-timers. And press photographers came around while we were talking to Davies. He said, "Boys, you don't want to have your photograph taken with me." And I'm ashamed to say we stepped aside. So, the atmosphere was really very bad. At that time Joe Bennett was the head of the Office of Chinese Affairs. He was a strong Nationalist Chinese sympathizer. His wife was the granddaughter of Liang Qi Qiao, an outstanding Chinese intellectual from the end of the dynastic period. And I remember that when we had meetings with Bennett as part of our training, and when we began to show some interest in Communist China, and some doubts about keeping them out of the UN, he lost his temper, and we were astonished by his reaction. I think then we, at least I, began to feel that excluding Peking from the United Nations was a bad idea, founded on emotional and other reasons that really didn't stand the scrutiny that I was able to bring to them, and such knowledge that I was able to acquire about China. Most of the people in my class felt the same way, but we learned that it was imperative that we keep our mouths shut about this. And indeed, I found myself later in my

Library of Congress

career having to give speeches arguing against Peking being seated in the UN, as year after year we fought the battle to keep them out until we gave up.

Q: We'll come back again to the training, but let's go to Barranquilla. You were in Barranquilla, which is a port of Colombia, from when to when?

DREXLER: I got there in early 1957, and left in 1958. I was a replacement for Harry Shlaudeman, who went on to much greater things than I did. Harry was unable to get along with the Consul at that time, George Phelan, who insisted that he be removed from Barranquilla, and Harry was sent up to Bogota, and as I said, on his way up. So I was sent to take Harry's place as Vice-Consul with George Phelan.

Q: Could you talk a little about George Phelan, because he's one of the old Consular hands.

DREXLER: Yes he is. He was a Latin American hand, he had relatives, an uncle, a brother, perhaps both were also in the Service. And George was for me the perfect first supervisor and Consul, and we remained lifelong friends. I had the pleasure of seeing him again when I was head of the Board of Examiners and he was brought back from retirement as an examiner, helping to fulfill our need for people with a minority background. I guess, on his mother's side, there was a Latin-Hispanic connection. He was bilingual, and an expert in his Consular work, and well loved in the Barranquilla community, particularly for the important role he played. He and I happened to be in Colombia at one of the two major turning points in its modern history, which was when the military dictator, the only one they had, was overthrown — Rojas Pinilla. He was one of the dictators who was coddled and encouraged, even, by Dulles, and to some extent, by Eisenhower. Rojas Pinilla had commanded the Colombian brigade in Korea, which gave him a special standing in the eyes of the American military, and someone like Eisenhower. By the time I got there his rule had become increasingly brutal, and he had a secret police,

Library of Congress

who on one occasion when I was alone at the Consulate, came in and dragged out a man seated at my desk, and threw him in prison.

There was heavy loss of life, as Rojas's army turned their guns on people. But none of this bothered Dulles. And about six months before I arrived, Dulles came to Bogota, and had a meeting with Rojas. Dulles was criticized over that in the States and in Latin America for obvious reasons, his association with a brutal dictator. But some of us thought that maybe what they had said privately would make Dulles look better. But when I did research for the book that I recently finished which will be coming out soon on the history of our relations with Colombia, I finally saw the documents that were released 30 years later in the normal process by the Historian of the Department, recording the conversations. And they make it look even worse. Dulles said to Rojas that at that time in world history, in late 1956, there were three Christian leaders manning the ramparts of defense against Communism: Syngman Rhee in Korea, Diem in Vietnam, and Chiang Kai-shek in Nationalist China. And now Dulles welcomed Rojas Pinilla into this pantheon. And of course the dictator was overwhelmed by Dulles tribute, as were other people present. And the transcript record of their conversation, which one supposes was sanitized a bit, even so is still appalling.

So there we sat in Barranquilla with George Phelan, watching the regime and its horrors. But George cultivated the opposition political leadership, especially the liberals. And on the morning of the day that the planned uprising was to begin to overthrow Rojas, a couple arrived at the Consulate, to whom I was introduced by George. The lady I was told was to be put in our walk-in vault, and lock her in, if the secret police came to arrest her. Her husband was a Liberal Party leader, and he was going to work from our office, which was above the Central Plaza in Barranquilla and had communications that the police were reluctant to intercept or curtail. So I can still see the Liberal Party leader there in the offices, looking down on the city and using our phones and coordinating the operations which brought Rojas down. Now, of course, the most decisive drama was being played out in the capital. But Colombia, then as now, is unique, because it has four large metropolitan centers. Most Latin American countries has one chief capital city and everything happens

Library of Congress

there. But in Colombia there is Barranquilla, Medellin, Cali, and Bogota, and they are quite different and separated by high Andes mountains. So if you're going to bring something off, you can't just bring it off in Bogota, the way you can in Buenos Aires, say, or Lima. It has to work everywhere. So it worked in Barranquilla, because of the assistance that George provided, without authorization of course.

Q: I'd like to spell this out a little more, because I think it's fascinating. Was the leader actually doing this from our Consular office?

DREXLER: Yes, yes, he was in my office. I still see him looking out the window with my phone.

Q: This goes against everything we're supposed to do.

DREXLER: Yes, but of course it went with everything we should have been doing to support democracy. And since Rojas was brought down, George was Number One in the eyes of the liberated people of Barranquilla, as we all were, because of this role.

Q: Afterwards, obviously it must have been known that he was there.

DREXLER: No, I don't think so. There was a great deal of confusion in Colombia at that time. We did not have an Ambassador. He had been forced out because the dictator disliked him — this was Philip Bonsal. And because he appeared at the bull fights with the leader of the Liberal Party, and so he had to leave. And communications between Barranquilla and Bogota were very poor. I remember in those days I had to use a one-time pad to send a classified cable, which involved going to the Cable and Wireless Office or whatever it was called, writing it out, if they were open, and handing it in, and then it would go up to Bogota. We had no secure phone communications. So this was never known at our Embassy. I've recorded it in my book. I wanted to pay tribute to George.

Library of Congress

Q: How did you feel about it? This was your first time there. Were you a little bit wide-eyed about seeing something like this, because this is as atypical as I can think.

DREXLER: Well, it was rather exciting, especially to put the lady in the vault. As it happened, the secret police did not come, but I was thoroughly fed up with these people, from the incident when from the secret police came into my office and dragged this poor fellow away. We had no guards. We were in an office building, there was no security of any sort. And they dragged him on out. So when George came back he complained to the head of the Secret Police, who apologized and that the officer involved would be transferred immediately to Leticia, which is on the Amazon. But George said to me, "You better be careful at night, because the fellow may come back after you to settle scores." So I was a bit nervous, but nothing happened. We had no police force in the city, we had to keep guns in our house, and we had three fierce dogs outside and one chained to the sofa in the living room every night. So it was a rather wild place. But I thought it was fine, what we were doing with the liberals, with the civilians. And of course it worked on that very day. And the dictator — there was no bloodshed as it turned out — the dictator was forced out by his army comrades. The military government was put in place until the civilian regime was instituted and we were on very good terms with the military commander. There was a naval base in our district, there in Cartagena, headed by a Navy Captain. And many of these officers themselves were sick and tired of Rojas. They felt he was disgracing the military. So there were no second guesses, and no post mortems.

I think that the Department, and perhaps the Embassy, must have looked very bad after Rojas was overthrown, because right up to the very week he left power, the Pentagon still had plans to bring some of his closest military comrades to Washington for a pleasure trip, to show them the town, and to play up to them. Up to the very last week. And in researching my book I found intelligence assessments and Embassy reports that were wide of the mark, both as far as the current situation was concerned, and about what Rojas's prospects were. So the downfall, I think, came as a shock to them, not only in

Library of Congress

being unexpected, but in shattering all of the Department's and I think, the embassy's assessments and allusions about what was happening. So they were not in the mood, I think, to look for what we might have done in Barranquilla, but to cover themselves. And of course, an Ambassador, John Moors Cabot was sent. He was one of the men who was responsible for some of the bad assessments when he was in the Department. But he was well received and settled down, and we had very smooth sailing from then on. I should say that although the Colombians, the political and civilian leaders, had urged that we stop our support of Rojas, there was never any pitch for US intervention to bring him down, or to do the sort of thing we had done, under different circumstances, in Guatemala. They wanted to pull this off themselves. So I don't really know how it came about that George made this arrangement with the liberals, but obviously he had been in touch with them before, because it was done very smoothly. If it had failed, we would have been in difficulty, but...

Q: What about getting to and from Bogota? Was that still a problem?

DREXLER: Yes, you could only reach it by air. There was no train then. The first Americans, like the Spanish conquistadores did it by going up the Magdalena, and then over land. But you had to reach it by air. But Colombia had one of the earliest and best commercial airlines, now called Avianca. It was founded by Luftwaffe pilots from the German World War I Air Force. There was always a large German emigre colony in Colombia, Nazis included, in the 1940s. Some of the Avianca pilots still had Luftwaffe reserve commissions, but anyway, they still knew how to fly planes. Air travel was vital to hold the country together because of the mountainous terrain, and the great climatic differences. And flying was very easily done. But communications were a problem. In a place like Cartagena, for example, which is now a prime tourist resort and has an international airport, there was only a landing field paved in gravel, I remember. And when you asked when a plane was due, the airport manager might take his binoculars and then say, "I can't see it yet." It was all rather underdeveloped. But we flew around in these little planes and got around that way.

Library of Congress

Q: Did officers come down from Bogota to say what was going on?

DREXLER: Rarely. When Ambassador John Moors Cabot came, this was during the civilian government, he used to come down because he liked to go swimming. Although he was a Boston Brahman and Bogota is the most snobbish capital in South America, with its own patrician class, he liked to come down to the coast to relax. The people on the coast, the Costenos, are quite different from the Bogotanos. They are uninhibited and friendly and they celebrate Carnival, which is ignored in Bogota. And they have the tropical beaches, the climate, and so on. It's a wonderful antidote to Bogota. So Moors Cabot used to come down. The Embassy brought me up to Bogota once for a briefing, but I was primarily assigned to help pass the hors d'oeuvres at a reception given by the DCM. I found the DCM to be a totally intolerable person, not someone we in Barranquilla wanted to get acquainted with. And he had no interest in telling us what the view was from Bogota. Sometimes Dick Poole, who was the First Secretary for Political Affairs, would come down and brief us but he himself had a number of problems with the DCM and we didn't see much of him. There was also a Labor Attach#, whose name I can't remember, who came down, and I remember his visit because his work on the coast with trade unionists, after the overthrow of Rojas Penilla, was curtailed due to the American company, Electric Bond and Share, EBASCO, which owned American Foreign Power, which owned the electric company and system in Colombia at this time. The Labor Attach# was trying to encourage Colombian laborers to follow American union practices and organizations, and collective bargaining and so on, to counter left-wing and communist inroads. But the American company complained. They didn't want any union. American style was just as bad as Communist style. So he was told not to come down anymore. Barranquilla was a very unhealthy place. The food, the climate were very difficult to bear. Then the Department sent out word that they were going to rebuild the China corps, and I volunteered. And because I had done Chinese before, they pulled me out after about 20 months in Barranquilla, and after I had lost nearly 20 pounds.

Library of Congress

Q: I'd like to stick to Barranquilla for a little bit. By the way, yesterday I was interviewing Terence Leonhardy, who was talking about his first assignment, which was Barranquilla, in 1942-45.

DREXLER: That would be very interesting, during the war. They had Nazis nearby.

Q: Could you talk about your Consular business — the American community, problems, visas, Consular stories?

DREXLER: The American community was very small. There was a leading patrician American family, the Parrishes, who were landowners, and related to Samuel Hollipeter, a retired American executive who had come down and designed the city's water system and had stayed on. Grace Lines was there, Singer Sewing Machine, and Coca Cola. That was our American society.

Q: Any oil groups?

DREXLER: No. We had the wife of the Singer Sewing Machine man and the wife of the Grace Line man, as locally hired American secretarial employees. And so our ties with these people were very close. But we also had American Protestant missionaries, who came to me shortly after I arrived, and told me about the problems they had had under Rojas, who persecuted Protestants, and missionaries in particular. And when I asked them why they hadn't come to the Consulate before, they said it was because I was the first Protestant to be assigned to the Consulate; all the other officers were known to be Catholics and would be presumed to be unhelpful to them. We also had a sizeable number of Hungarian refugees, who shortly after the Hungarian revolution, in October 1956, had unwisely accepted refuge in Colombia, thinking it would bring them nearer to the United States, which was true physically, but not legally, because we regarded them no longer as refugees, but as persons who had accepted resettlement elsewhere. We had leading musicians from the Budapest Opera and Philharmonic, wasting away there in the

Library of Congress

tropics, and also the Hungarian Army fencing team, which had been brought in by Rojas, who wanted them to teach fencing to his officer corps, and when he was overthrown, of course they had no prospect of doing this, and also found themselves, like the Budapest musicians and opera singers, unable to get to the United States. So they regularly visited me, and we had heart wrenching scenes in my office when, I remember one opera singer got pregnant and said that surely she and her child would die if she had to give birth there in Barranquilla. It was a difficult experience for me. The people were desperate, unable to speak the language, and found themselves in this rotten tropical port. I was quite unable to help them. Sometimes these sessions went on for an hour or more, which seemed like twice as long. We had the usual visa and passport cases. At that time, tuberculosis was still prevalent, certainly in Colombia, and was grounds for denial of a visa. We would require a medical exam only if the person might be suffering or have a communicable disease. There was one case of a man who looked to me like he was dying as he applied for a visa, but assured me he was in the best of health. But I was obliged to require him to take a medical exam, and it turned out he had tuberculosis. And he came back, coughing, spitting it all around, in near hysteria with his wife, and he said that he admitted that he had tried to keep this from me, but he had to go to the United States for treatment. He had had some kind of balloon in his lung inflated to keep it going, and I said "There is no way I can let you go." And he died shortly thereafter, and I was blamed for the death by the local press, because he was a prominent person. My decision was regarded as heartless, and not understood. But that's not out of the ordinary. We had an airplane crash. One of these small planes that was always flitting about. I had to go out — it had dropped down in a swamp outside of Barranquilla. I chartered a boat to go out and rescue the people, and we found, after we finally located the wreck, it had sort of belly landed in a marsh, and they were all sitting on top of the wings, waiting to be rescued, Americans and some others. And most of them were embarrassed rather than pleased that I rescued them, because it was a cheap, bargain flight, on a small airline called Lloyd, to Miami. And this was something that the people of the upper class in Barranquilla would not admit using, just as they wouldn't admit, perhaps, going to Sears Roebuck for their clothes in those days.

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And so they were embarrassed. And I remember some of them, as we were literally taking them off the wings, were telling me, you know, nothing of real urgency, but explaining to me that they had not been able to get on the Pan American flight, and that was why I had found them on Lloyd.

There was a port, and we had to deal with crew list visas, and that sort of thing. The one thing we didn't have to deal with was drugs or narcotics. There was a lot of smuggling going on, and we had no liquor privileges through the embassy. They didn't help us in any respect, so the liquor that I and the Consul served was brought in by well known, reputable, dependable smugglers, who landed the cases on the beach in up the coast. Even the Collector of Customs at that time would proudly show off neckties and things that he had acquired and were known to be smuggled in. So there was a well established contraband operation, with no stigma attached to this type of activity. And that has had some implications for the drug problem, which was 20 years in the future, but which arose in that very same area. The criminal class was highly developed then, not so much in Barranquilla as in Medellin. It was quite sophisticated, and even then was known for its skill in counterfeiting American dollar bills, which brought regularly to us those Secret Service officers, from that branch of the service that deals with counterfeiting, or did then. And so, this same criminal class and its sophistication figured again 20 years later when the great drug cartels were formed. The use of small aircraft became vital in the early stages of the cocaine trafficking. The small airports everywhere, which were so vital at that time, just to get around, became vital for carrying the stuff to the United States. So, looking back at that period, I can see, so to speak, a kind of infrastructure already there, waiting to be developed when the drug cartels moved in. There was also a general disrespect for authority, a sort of sneaking admiration for people who got by with things, petty criminals and so on. This was also a factor.

Q: During the Rojas regime, did you have any problems with protection and welfare, arrest cases, or anything like that?

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DREXLER: Yes, we did. Americans would turn up and that was the first time I ever heard the word "busted." An American called me and asked me to send a telegram to his mother, telling her "I got busted in Cartagena." And of course, I found out soon enough. The Colombian police were very good, then as later, when I was DCM, at picking out nervous American youths at the airports. They had a profile, of course, I needn't describe it to you, of the kind that was attracted to drugs there. And so they were routinely picked up. In those days it was marijuana, if anything. And I would sometimes have to go to the Secret Police headquarters to try to work things out for Americans. Sometimes also they would come in — we had the whole north coast, and there were many little ports, and surprisingly young Americans would come all over from Panama, or God knows how, and wind up in these small ports where there was no Customs or anything, and then make their way to Barranquilla, and had to regularize their status. So I would have to take them to see the head of the Secret Police, who was named Pion Mendoza, and the poor man — well, not so poor, he deserved it — had Parkinson's disease, and he shook. And I thought that that was in a way appropriate, because during his interrogations it wasn't only the people who were under arrest who were trembling, but so was he. I was always able to work things out with him, as I was with the military people there. The only bad incident is the one I described. When the military took over under a junta, as a sort of provisional government, after Rojas fell, and before the civilians came in, I had occasion to work with the military. Each of these four cities had a brigade, with a brigadier general, and I had to get the general's assurances that American property and individuals would be protected during this unsettled time. We didn't know what would happen. As it turned out there was no threat. But anyway, we got their assurances, and we had very good relations with them. There was from no quarter any anti-Americanism, really. Dulles crimes of coddling the dictator were not held against us, and we did not have an American capitalist position there in Colombia in the extractive industries, which would have nurtured, as it did in other places, this sort of resentment. Coca Cola, Singer Sewing Machine, and Grace Lines are not in that category. There was a banana company problem, but it wasn't severe. And so we were well thought of. Of course, I spoke Spanish, which helped. My college

Library of Congress

roommate was from Guatemala, and he was responsible for my knowing the language, so I had no problem with that. And as I said, Phelan was respected, and the Consulate had a very good image. It was a fairly large Consular corps, but we were number one, of course, we were the most important people in town. I was engaged in all sorts of educational exchange programs, giving out scholarships. There was a local Colombian-American school that I visited regularly and I also made periodic official trips to Cartagena. Cartagena was still smarting from the closing of a Vice-Consulate there a few years earlier. Now of course, it's become a very important city, but it wasn't so much then, it was a bit of a backwater. But they had their pride and a great historical tradition. So I was the officer designated to go there from time to time and perform Consular services for a few Americans and Colombians, and to sort of show the flag, hold their hand, and what not. Cartagena in those days was a charming place. Now of course it has luxury hotels, the beach is highly developed and everything is very expensive.

Q: So you came back for your Chinese language training. Could you explain how the Chinese study course was set up? We're talking about 1957?

DREXLER: This was 1958-59. Actually, I was at it for almost two years. Most of it was in Taichung where FSI language school was operated in a small town where no one spoke English, including the teachers, and that was the best part of it. It was preceded by about six months in Washington, where we began basic language training and an area studies course, which at that time was supervised by Harold Hinton, who later became a professor at G.W. — a well respected authority in Asian studies and the China field. Nicholas Bodman, a very gifted linguist, was in charge of the language part. We had excellent teachers, who were all refugees from Nationalist China, and distinguished men, highly cultured Chinese from the old school. The course was very good, and we learned Chinese quite well by the time we got to the language school. And once there, of course, we really took off. The teachers were expert, the atmosphere, the climate was just perfect for that. The school had a very good reputation as far as the language abilities of its graduates was concerned. I make that point because, not to praise my own cohort, but to point out that

Library of Congress

in later years, particularly in the "70s, the graduates of the language school, which was then in Taipei, and then later in China itself, were not being turned out with a high enough language skill, according to the superiors for whom they worked, in their first assignments. But we had a very good operations. Howard Levy was the head of the school in Taichung at that time, and we had to fight off becoming too Chinese. We wore Chinese padded gowns in the winter, as it was quite cold in Taichung in the winter, and because that was the only clothing that you could get, and it was very warm. The student's wives got caught up in Chinese cooking, and we got caught up in Chinese art and calligraphy, and the poetry and so on. And we were in this very Chinese community. There was a very small American airbase near Taichung, and we were resented by the Americans there, as we were thought to be putting on airs. These were Americans who imported frozen Chinese Chungking Chicken from the States, and who used to talk about going into "Chinatown" to shop. And of course we were exposed to the Nationalist Chinese mindset. There we lived in special compounds, that were formally occupied by the Japanese overlords, beautiful old Japanese style houses. And we were taken to Taipei. We heard the Generalissimo speak. We couldn't understand him because of his thick dialect, but we saw old China there. And I like it. It's a beautiful island, and we associated with some very fine Chinese people, refugees, intellectuals, painters, and hundreds of generals and admirals who had come over and had nothing to do. Some of them were forced to take on menial tasks. I know a noodle seller who came by at night who was a colonel at one time, and we would frequently be invited to the homes of these people and see packing crates in the next room, which we learned not to ask about, because we realized they couldn't unpack politically, because they were just there temporarily and they were going to go back, even though by then seven or eight years passed. The island was still in a state of siege. We had to keep emergency rations for evacuation. There was curfew, a differential for serving in a war zone; the shelling of Quemoy Island and that sort of thing. But I'm getting ahead of it, perhaps.

Library of Congress

Q: When you got there, could you describe the group of your cohorts who were taking Chinese at the time, and also, how did you all view a career — here you were with the huge country of China sitting there, in which we had no representation. How did you all view China, and taking Chinese as a career?

DREXLER: We were captivated by things Chinese. The culture is a powerful one, once you are exposed to it.

Q: By the way, were you married at this point?

DREXLER: No I wasn't. It is a powerful culture, universal in its scope, and it exerted a very strong attraction. As far as I know, none of the people who were with me then have ever stopped feeling this effect. When I started here in FSI, which at that time was in the basement, the converted garage, of what was then called Arlington Towers, there were just three of us in the class. And we became fast friends. You either did that, or you became fast enemies, because we were in this windowless room, hour after hour, month after month. When I got to Taichung, there were various levels of students there. There were about 30 students, some from State, some from CIA, some military, some CIA under military cover. There were about four classes, I guess, there, and we progressed through. The group that I was in, there were about eight or nine of us, and the senior officer was James Leonard, who went on to become an Ambassador and was head of the UN Association, and is still very active in Foreign Service affairs, and I worked with him later in the Arms Control Agency. He was our senior officer, and the only one who had a telephone. But we were not able to find out much information about Communist China, because all this was censored by the Nationalists. Our teachers, of course, were refugees, and some of them had left their family behind. But we had a Kuomintang, the National Chinese Party intelligence agent among our teachers, who was known to keep watch, not only on the other teachers, to be sure that they were politically correct, but I suppose to file reports on us, and any transgressions we might have. But for example, when Time Magazine put Mao's picture on the cover, they couldn't tear off the cover, but

Library of Congress

they have a Chinese character, meaning bandit, that was stamped right over his face. The Encyclopedia Britannica was pirated then, I bought a copy, and all sections on China referring to Communist China were whited out, otherwise it was a perfect, 24-volume edition. And the maps were changed to show the capital as Beiping, instead of Peking, or Beijing, as it became. So you couldn't learn anything about Communist China. We went to Hong Kong from time to time and were briefed at the Consulate General. And there, of course, is where the China watching took place. We could bring back books and things, but we had to keep them to ourselves, because our servants would be embarrassed, if they were Chinese texts, to be exposed to this. It would be like having a pornographic novel out when a Catholic priest comes to visit. You put these things away. So there was a strong pull, and we began to feel all the more strongly, as I think I was saying before, that the policy of isolating China was wrong. We became much more sympathetic to what was going on in China. On the one hand, the Taiwan scene was very good, but the Chinese there were building on the Japanese infrastructure. The railroad system, all the farmhouses were brick, electricity, sewage — everything they built on that. But there had been a time, when the Nationalists first came, of great oppression. But by the time I arrived the island was prospering, so there was no suffering or wretchedness, and then there was also this dose of the old China, and the graciousness of the Chinese to us. But still we knew that what we thought was the real China was across the way, and our aspiration was to become involved in that. None of us especially wanted to be assigned to the embassy in Taipei. And the Ambassador was rather cold toward us. He was Everett Drumright. He paid very little attention to the school or to our studies. He never visited, and the only time we really heard from him was when we made a rather daring visit by plane to Quemoy Island, off the coast, on one of the days when the Communists were not shelling it. They did it on alternate days, it was a strange system.

Q: Also, if I recall, Drumright was what one could call an old China hand, but did not speak Chinese, is that right?

Library of Congress

DREXLER: Yes, I don't believe he spoke Chinese.

Q: You had that dual core, of China hands that never spoke Chinese, who were not sympathetic at all to those who did.

DREXLER: That's right. We all aspired to Hong Kong as an assignment, but there were only so many places at the time when we graduated, so we were instead sent to what were called peripheral posts, around China, where there were overseas Chinese communities, and once you got such an assignment, you were able to study at FSI the dialect spoken there, and I was assigned to Singapore, so I had three or four months learning the Hokkien dialect, which was terribly difficult, but then at the last minute, the assignment was changed to Kuala Lumpur, where they speak Cantonese mostly, and I didn't have time to learn that. I became the first Chinese Affairs officer at the embassy there. And I was very frostily received, because Kuala Lumpur in those days was the Indonesian language officers' bailiwick. They had a tough language to learn, and few places to speak it. There was Jakarta, Surabaya, Medan, and then there was Kuala Lumpur. I was received at the airport by an Indonesian language political officer with whom I had to work. He said, "Welcome Bob, but frankly, we don't know why they sent you here." But actually Kuala Lumpur is mostly a Chinese city, and I developed contacts in the Chinese community to such an extent that the Police Special Branch complained to the Ambassador about it because they didn't want the US to start sympathizing with the Malaysian Chinese.

Q: You were there from when to when?

DREXLER: I got there in 1960 and left at the end of 1963.

Q: That was the Emergency?

DREXLER: The Emergency was officially over. The guerrillas, largely Chinese, were still up in the northern jungles. They were no longer killing people in the city, but you were

Library of Congress

not allowed to go up into the northern territories adjoining Thailand. This Communist insurgency had been mostly put down, and that was a remarkable success in those days. You know, when Americans were still trying to fathom how to deal with such guerrillas, the British showed how it could be done. They were successful. But there were circumstances in Malaysia that couldn't quite be duplicated elsewhere. At first I found myself at loose ends in our Embassy there, because as I said, people didn't welcome me, and they put me to work as visa officer again, which I objected to, because I hadn't learned Chinese to give visas there, and I asked to be reassigned to another post. And then they gave in, and made me the junior political officer in the Political Section, and that's when I began to work with the Chinese community.

Q: Who was the Ambassador?

DREXLER: When I first arrived, it was Homer Byington, who had largely a European professional background.

Q: An Italian hand.

DREXLER: Yes, of the old school. He later retired there in Naples. And he ran the embassy in a colonial style. We men were all required to wear white cotton or linen suits. The Post Report said that full dress was required of officers, that is, silk hat, white tie, tails, as well as morning coat, white and black dinner jackets, and white suits. This was before the era of polyester, and that sort of thing. And Byington changed suits twice a day at the Embassy. He would come in looking starched in the morning, go home for lunch, dump his suit, put on a fresh one, and looked fairly well starched throughout the day. The rest of us wilted. I fell afoul of him very early when I was observed going to the men's room without my jacket, and my supervisor called me in and said the Ambassador took a very dim view of this. It was a small post, but run in a very stiff way. His wife, known as "Lady Jane," made frequent shopping trips to Singapore, and all the other wives were required to turn out at the airport or the rail station to see her off, wearing hats and gloves, in a tropical

Library of Congress

climate. This was also of course, the style of the British who were still there in important numbers, and whose style the Byingtons found attractive.

The Peace Corps arrived when I was there, it was one of their pilot projects. Just before they arrived, and after I'd been there perhaps six or seven months, we held a weekly staff meeting about the Corps' plans. We were sitting around the Ambassador's office, about eight or nine of us in all, and the DCM said they had to designate an officer for liaison with the Peace Corps. The Ambassador looked around, and pointed to me, but he didn't recall my name. And this is after I was there for six months as part of just a nine or ten officer staff. Anyway, I was put in charge of the Peace Corps. The Corps did not really want such a person, but that's another story.

The Ambassador's residence was located alongside the golf course. And Byington made himself notorious for not allowing people to come in off the course to retrieve stray golf balls, which were numerous, as you would expect, if you had a lawn near the 17th or 18th hole.

Finally he left to retire, and then Charles Baldwin came in as the new Ambassador. He had retired from the service a few years earlier as a career officer, but then he was recalled. He was a fine gentleman. A very distinguished diplomat. He didn't know much about Southeast Asia, but he made a great hit with his staff, and with the local people. He was a wonderful antidote to Homer Byington. He brought in a secretary, Olga Hladio, who had served previously in Vienna and Tehran, and was going to go to Moscow, but at the last minute her assignment had been canceled. Baldwin interviewed her and selected her as his secretary. And I married her. So that's why Kuala Lumpur will always be an especially important post to me. It was Ambassador Baldwin who gave my wife in marriage, and walked with her down the almost endless aisle of the great cathedral there, and who gave us a wedding reception.

Q: He learned your name.

Library of Congress

DREXLER: Yes, he learned my name. I have the warmest feelings toward him. He was there when Malaysia was formed, that is to say, when the federation of Malaya joined with Singapore, and what was then Sarawak and North Borneo. And he was very close to the father of that country, Tunku Abdul Rahman, a Malay prince, and it was very good to have Baldwin there, because the transition was difficult. It finally led to Singapore's breaking off, under Lee Kuan Yew. We didn't have a major role to play, but such a role as we did play was discharged very capably by Mr. Baldwin.

Q: Let's talk a bit about what you did. You had to sort of make a place for yourself as the Chinese language officer. How did you do that?

DREXLER: First of all, I established contacts with the local Chinese, which hadn't been done before. The country was governed by a coalition party, which was responsible for its independence, and still is in charge up to today, called the United Malay's National Organization. And it formed an alliance with parties representing the other two major communal groups, the Chinese and the Tamil Indians. The Tamil Indians were a small community descended from persons brought in to work in the tin mines, as were some of the Chinese. There was a Malayan Chinese association and a Malayan Indian association, part of the alliance. No one much bothered with the Indian association, which was a tiny party, but no one in the embassy had established a relationship either with the more important Malayan Chinese Association. So I did that for the first time. Actually, I called on the Indians too, but mainly got to know the Chinese leaders of that political party, which was part of the government coalition. There were also Chinese who were in opposition to the alliance. And particularly in the city of Penang, a coastal city on the Straits of Malacca, which is largely Chinese, an island. One of the local Chinese politicians there, Lin Chong Eu, had formed an opposition party, and I was the first embassy person to go up and talk to him. The government frowned on this sort of thing, but both of the Ambassadors encouraged me to do it, and they never tried to curb my activities. Of course, we just had

Library of Congress

chats with these people. It was the sort of contacts that are normal in posts around the world.

There were one or two occasions when I was asked to help the Central Intelligence Agency in Kuala Lumpur, because they didn't have any Chinese language officers either. They occasionally ran operations which required some knowledge of Chinese, and asked me to work with them on this, pledging not to tell my State Department superiors about it. So I did this, and helped them with a couple of operations, which they found useful. And I also had a Chinese lady as my assistant, who formerly worked with the Special Branch during the Emergency, doing press translations. There was a very large number of Chinese newspapers, locally as well as in Kuala Lumpur. And she had been working for some time before I got there, but nobody was paying attention to what she did, and her work production fell off, and she nearly left as well. My arrival, of course, delighted her, because she had at least one more reader, but also someone who was willing to work with her and see that her work focused on things of interest. So we revved up what I think was a very good Chinese press translation service, of documents that we circulated to the other political officers, and to the Ambassador, who were not getting it from anybody else. So this was important. I became pretty well established in the embassy, when they could see I could be of use to the CIA and to the other political officers. I could help out in the Consulate. USIA would sometimes ask for my help too; I would occasionally serve as an interpreter for the PAO. And of course friends always wanted you to take them to local Chinese restaurants and order the meal in Chinese, which was something I never learned to do, but tried to finesse. So I came to enjoy the post quite a lot.

Q: I assume you were looking for influence from Mainland China at that time. Did you find any?

DREXLER: No, not really. I found Nationalist influence. The government, of course, was very anticommunist, just having put down a communist rebellion. And the penalty for being found with a weapon was hanging. The Emergency was a terribly bloody affair,

Library of Congress

and the Communist Party was banned, and so on. There were no relations with Peking, of course, and there must have been a Nationalist Chinese Embassy, but I don't really remember it, or I certainly didn't have anything to do with it. My interest in the Chinese was as Malaysian Chinese, and how they were faring in their own country. The big question was Chinese education, the future of the language, the Malay's national language policy, these were the hot political issues; that the Malays were imposing their own language officially on the Chinese, forcing them to learn, Malay, English, which they did, and their own Chinese dialects at home, and sometimes Mandarin at school. Many of these young people were learning four languages. And the future of their schools, which were largely privately funded by the local communities, was jeopardized. And I was in touch with the Chinese School Teachers Federation, and I was following that. What we wanted to know was, was the country going to blow up. There have been cases where there were severe racial riots.

Q: One thinks of Indonesia. Amok is a Malay term.

DREXLER: In fact, it did not happen while I was there. Shortly thereafter, they had a terrible riot, with great loss of life. So my job was to keep my finger on that pulse. The Mainland - Nationalist thing did really not figure.

Q: How about the counter thing that was happening in Singapore and Lee Kuan Yew. Here was a real Chinese city and leader, who is around today?

DREXLER: He was regarded as a dangerous leftist, and 110% Chinese. Not in a Communist or Nationalist sense, but just too Chinese. He represented a great threat to the Malays in Kuala Lumpur. They had great qualms about bringing Singapore into the Federation, and they did so only in connection with North Borneo and Sarawak, which had a non-Chinese indigenous population, which they thought would help balance the Chinese. When they saw these Dayaks and former headhunters come into the Parliament for the first time on the day I was there, the Malays, I think, had their doubts whether this

Library of Congress

was really going to be the counterbalance that they had anticipated. But it didn't work with Singapore and Lee wanted it to. He was in tears when they broke up. But Singapore and Lee were just too Chinese, and at that time, Lee was regarded as a leftist. And of course some even thought he was a Communist. The DCM in Kuala Lumpur at that time thought that he was almost in the pay of the Chinese Communists. This was James O'Sullivan. But it was very easy to tar Chinese who resisted Malay dominance, to tar them with a Communist brush. I thought that was unfounded, that the connections did not exist.

Q: You were there when Kennedy, particularly Robert Kennedy came. And this tremendous emphasis on youth, a real arrogance. Can you talk about Robert Kennedy coming there?

DREXLER: He made a bad impression on me personally, though we awaited his arrival with a great deal of enthusiasm. I was there when his brother was assassinated, and scurrying around to find a condolence book and hanging the black streamer on our flag, and having our stationery edged in black, and attending an unforgettable requiem mass in the cathedral. We were all devastated. So Robert still had heroic proportions to us. But when he got there, his behavior — well, you used a word I would find very apt — his arrogance and his self absorption were so strong, that as he waltzed through the office and greeted us, not perfunctorily but, well, arrogantly, I can't improve on that — the charm wore off very soon. He also was involved in mediating a quarrel between Indonesia and Malaysia, the “Confrontasi,” the confrontation by Sukarno of the federation. Robert Kennedy thought that he could bring this mediation off quickly and prove his skills, his diplomatic abilities. And he made, I remember, demands on the communication system which we simply were not up to, and he was totally unrealistic and short tempered, and unforgiving when neither our embassy, nor Jakarta, nor Manila, where he went off to, was able to provide him with the backup which he felt he needed, and which I suppose he got in Washington with his entourage. So I think he left thinking badly of us, as we did of him. The one virtue of that experience was that shortly after his trip, a much more modern, sophisticated communications system was installed, which we all benefitted from, and

Library of Congress

which was probably overdue. He, of course, did not succeed in mediating this dispute, but made a lot of waves.

Q: Just to sort of wrap this up, as this Confrontasi was going on with Indonesia, were people in the embassy taking sides on this?

DREXLER: We were hostile to the Indonesians. We didn't like Sukarno at that time, and we, among the younger officers there was dislike of the American Ambassador in Jakarta, Howard Jones, who was sometimes called Sukarno's court jester; that's how we viewed him. And of course it was Jones and his country against Baldwin and our country. And in true foreign service fashion, we identified with our host country on this. And of course Sukarno and the Indonesians were easy to identify against. There was poor little Malaysia, a democratic country. And we admired the Tunku, the leader, the prime minister, very much. So we were all for them. I remember when the crowds charged right past my apartment to go to burn the Indonesian embassy, which was just three blocks away, I didn't mind at all. No one was hurt, but we thought they were getting what they deserved. The Indonesian Ambassador and his entourage were all military men and made it clear that they looked down on the Malays. They also felt that the Malays were handed their independence by the British, unlike the Indonesians, who had to fight a bloody war against the Dutch.

Q: What was your impression of Tunku Abdul Rahman?

DREXLER: He was a prince, literally, and also in character. He played an indispensable role at that time. He was the royal line of the House of Kedah. At that time, as now, the Federation of Malay States, which had been formed by the British, of course, had I think nine, or at least seven sultanates. The Sultan of Johore, for example, was well known and even had his own army. These were people who had the almost slavish allegiance of their Malay citizens, who were loyal to their Sultans before anything else. And Malaya, when it became independent, had a king, who served for four years, who was elected by

Library of Congress

these Sultans, and the role of king passed from one to the other. So the Sultans were very important. They were the cultural, and religious leaders of their sultanates, their states, as we called them then. Kedah was one of these. So the Tunku came from an aristocracy that played an important role. He was English educated, he was trained as a lawyer, he spoke English fluently. And he was a democrat, basically, despite his aristocratic background. By the time I got there he was already on top of the political situation, so I can't really account for his rise. But I certainly witnessed the hold he had. And most important, the Chinese trusted him, and that was vital. They did not trust his deputy, Razak, who succeeded him, who was regarded like most Malays, as basically anti-Chinese. But the Tunku, by his previous political career, by his friendships and his demeanor and conduct, won the confidence of the Chinese, and of course the Indians too. So this was vital. There was no one else like him, no one else near him. So the great fear was that he might die, he might have a heart attack or something, and then what would happen? Of course, he was lucky that he was working with a very enlightened colonial government, the British, at a time when they realized they had to let go. So the transition and the relationship during the transition with the former colonial masters was ideal, very smooth, to the extent that many Brits were kept on after Independence — the Chief of the Supreme Court, the top military commander — to ease the transition until the Malays could work their way up. That showed how relaxed both sides were. It's impossible to think of the Dutch staying on as head of the Indonesian Supreme Court under Sukarno. But this is what happened in Malaysia. And then of course they both had put down the Communist insurgents during the Emergency. This of course was a terrible experience for the Chinese community. But by the time of independence, it had been put down. The Chinese Communist guerrillas had clearly lost, order had been restored, and the Chinese community in the cities wanted to get on with their lives, educate their children, make money, be secure, and so on. They realized that the pro-Peking communists had no future. They were beaten and they didn't really have to worry about them. So they got over the Emergency experience fairly quickly. I think the one mistake, perhaps, and Ambassador Baldwin cautioned the Tunku against this, was adopting Malay as the national language, rather than English. We said, why

Library of Congress

not English? After all, it's not the language of either of the three major communities, yet the leaders of all three know it. It's an international language, and so on. But the Malays couldn't have it.

Q: Why don't we stop at this point. I want to put down here — where did you go after this? You left in 1963...

DREXLER: I came back to the State Department, to the Bureau of Intelligence and Research, and I was the analyst following China's activities in Africa.

Continuation of interview: March 11, 1996

DREXLER: From 1963 to the end of 1966, I was in INR, working for Alan Whiting. By that time, I would say that the China corps had been reconstituted. The purged victims from the McCarthy era were gone. There were a few old China hands left, but not many. And by that time, by the mid-"60s there were a number of officers, China specialists, approaching senior rank, and the mid-career group, that I was in. The Chinese language school in Taichung had been quite successful in turning out a new corps. And these people were becoming more confident, I guess, and attention was being paid to them. And of course our loyalty was not in question, because most of us had been school boys at the time China was lost.

It was also at this time that the techniques of China watching were perfected. This is largely the accomplishment of Alan Whiting, for whom I went to work. He had a university background, and was celebrated as the author of a book, "China Crosses the Yalu," which was a study of how the Chinese had signaled us that they were likely to intervene if we moved closer to their borders, how we misread, or ignored, or misunderstood these signals. And this technique of careful scrutiny of Chinese public statements, editorials, and handling of the news, and so on, was really the essence of China watching. And it was the only means we had to find out what was going on in a closed society. And the China watchers that Alan Whiting trained got so good that after a few years, those who worked in

Library of Congress

Hong Kong would be visited by diplomats — the British, the Dutch, the Norwegians — who were in Peking, who would come down to talk to the American China watchers in Hong Kong to find out what we thought was going on. We often knew better than they, I think. So Whiting trained us all, and he had a great influence through his writings and techniques, even on those who didn't work for him directly. At that time the INR office was called the Office of Sino-Soviet Affairs, which even by that time was an anomaly, because the split between China and the Soviet Union was so profound, there was no reason anymore for lumping the analysts together. But it went on that way for some time. And even as much as five or six years later I would still run into people — political figures, congressmen — who would question if there really was a split between Peking and Moscow. If there wasn't instead really a devious plot to make us lower our guard. And so there in INR I sat in a cubicle right next to a Soviet specialist, who was also working on Africa. As time went on, it was clear that our focuses were quite different, and far apart.

Q: Before we move on, can you explain a bit about what the techniques were; how Whiting was training you?

DREXLER: What we focused on, actually, the only source material we had from China, were the public statements that the Chinese made to their own people, and for foreign consumption. Foreign Ministry statements in the latter case, and daily editorials in the former, although People's Daily editorials could touch on foreign affairs. So you kept careful record of these pronouncements, and you assumed, and I think Whiting is correct in having concluded some years before, that these statements were drafted painstakingly, with great care, down to the choice of adjective and adverb, that there was no carelessness. And very often, the more important the statement was, the more likely it was that it represented the outcome of a high party meeting, and that what you saw in the papers might have been the result of extensive debate, the consideration and rejection of many drafts, and you were able, by keeping careful record, to compare statements in People's Daily on a certain topic, or on a certain occasion — anniversaries, of course, were vigorously observed year after year — with its predecessors on the previous years,

Library of Congress

or on a previous subject, and note differences if certain formulas were missing. Formulas, for example, which might have identified political campaigns. You could conclude that this omission was not by accident. The writer didn't forget it; that this reflected a decision to put less emphasis on that particular campaign. You also paid careful attention to the order in which officials were named, because the hierarchy, which was quite complex in the party, the standing of individuals and any trends in the leadership, could often be detected from the turnout on occasions, and from who was standing next to Mao this year, and we would check to see where an official was placed on this occasion last year, and a great deal of information could be obtained this way. We were also occasionally successful in getting documents from China that were not meant for foreign consumption, or public consumption. And later, when I was in Hong Kong, I had charge of a unit that was responsible for getting these materials, and paying for them, actually. There was a brisk trade in them. Some of them were real, some of them were not real, as you might expect. The Japanese were among our chief competitors, and had at least as much money as we did.

To take a crude example of our China-watching technique, if People's Daily editorial warned the United States that if Washington took a certain step, it would be viewed with "concern" by the people of China and then a subsequent statement on this subject injected the word "grave" concern, this was not a slip, or just the result of a writer's use of a thesaurus. This meant a shift in emphasis, a growing concern. Using Whiting's book, and the warning statements that the Chinese put out before intervening in Korea, and we also had the statements they put out before attacking India in the '60s, we compiled almost a glossary of such warning statements. And I remember that one of the most extreme warnings, almost signaling military action on China's part, was the phrase, "Rein in your horses on the brink of the precipice." When you saw that phrase, it was a sign that something serious was probably going to happen; that military action was imminent, and on occasion in the '60s, we did see such a phrase, aimed again at the Indians, and we were, if not alarmed, quite concerned about it. So that was the basic technique of analysis.

Library of Congress

Q: Was this Chinese Chinese, or Chinese Communist? It sounds a bit like criminology. What was the genesis in China of this? Was it Communist or a Chinese manifestation?

DREXLER: No, it was Communist. It did not exist under the Nationalists, or before that time. It was a symptom of the regime's determination to indoctrinate the public thoroughly. The Chinese, on the whole, even today, even in the villages, are much more interested in politics and political questions, than say, farmers in Wisconsin or Idaho would be nowadays, because this was required by their local units, which went down to the neighborhood or farmhouse level. The regime had an intent and a felt need to inculcate the whole population with its line, and it had to use the press and to some extent, the radio, for this. There was nothing else. The regime, of course, was also bent on the most radical social, political, and economic reform programs, and they were controversial. They involved the regimentation of the life of the people to a great degree. So there was a need for information to go out in great detail. And sometimes we were able to see provincial newspapers, or how a provincial government handled a pronouncement from Peking. That could also be revealing, of course. So this system of indoctrination was, I think, more highly developed in Communist China than in the Soviet Union.

Q: A little bit sounds like it might have reflected the Mandarin establishment in a way. A much stronger hierarchy in China, as opposed to the Russian one.

DREXLER: Yes, that's true. When the system worked it did work that way. But of course the Mandarin system had broken down by the start of this century. There was a great deal of chaos and disorder, and of course the warlord period as well. But it's true that the Chinese, and in the Confucian system, were amenable to this sort of highly structured hierarchical approach to their lives.

Q: Was it clear in 1963, when you arrived there, that China and the Soviet Union were really apart?

Library of Congress

DREXLER: There was no doubt in our minds about that in INR. And then of course it became more pronounced in 1964, 65, and later. This was part of a basic change in the attitude of the China specialist toward their problem. It was a sort of revisionism. First of all, we saw that there was not a Sino-Soviet bloc. China was different and separate. Then we also began to conclude that China was basically weak, vulnerable, defensive, and reactive in its foreign relations. When I was first given the chance of the assignment of following China in Africa, there was great alarm that the Chinese were going to move in take it over. This was the time of the African decolonialization, there were new, vulnerable, naive countries there, and Zhou En-lai had made a visit during which he famously said Africa is ripe for revolution. And there was one other occasion, almost as famous: I think he was in Mali, and was quoted as looking at the wide open spaces there, and said something about how you have so much room here, and we're so crowded. Which of course led to the feeling that maybe there were 10 million Chinese on their way to Africa, which was ridiculous because at that time the regime couldn't get people to move from the eastern part of China to the west, to say nothing of going to Mali. So I found that this was exaggerated. But then the Vietnam War escalated, and I was put on the Vietnam problem, and my job in INR was to monitor the Chinese aid and assistance to Vietnam, and of course to try to give the signal if it appeared that China was going to intervene in the conflict, as it had done in Korea.

There again, we came to the conclusion that China was not behind the Vietnam War. North Vietnam was not China's proxy, as Dean Rusk was convinced. And we said this in our reports. The office I was in was also responsible for monitoring North Vietnam, with Dorothy Avery, our first-class Vietnam analyst. And we sent in reports showing that the bombing of North Vietnam was not breaking morale, contrary to what the Administration thought or expected. We also had an officer with us, Frank Corey, who analyzed the Tonkin Gulf incident, based on communications and signals intelligence, and wrote the memo a few weeks after the incident, which concluded that it had not taken place as the Administration claimed, or reported. It is now widely accepted that it did not in fact,

Library of Congress

but it was Frank Corey, arriving at this conclusion from communications intelligence just weeks after it took place. He put this in a memo and it went forward, but of course God knows what the effect was. Well, we know what the effect was, namely nothing. It was ignored. For me then to read McNamara's latest book *In Retrospect*, particularly the passage in which he says that part of the reason that they made so many errors was that the government, and I suppose he meant the State Department, did not have the expertise in China or in North Vietnam that it should have — this is rubbish. Those experts were there. I was working among them to a certain extent. I was among them. And we published memos regularly, but they were disregarded.

I remember particularly occasions when Alan Whiting would run into the office and tell us that George Ball, who was our hero in those days, had a meeting at the White House in the afternoon at 3 o'clock. We should immediately crank out a memo with the latest intelligence. We fed to George Ball throughout this period intelligence which supported, and confirmed in his own mind his ideas about the Vietnam War, its current course, and how it should go. But there again, all to no avail. So, as I said, McNamara is quite wrong in that judgment.

But also at this time, ideas arose which I think have damaged the China specialist corps, especially the idea that the threat from China has been exaggerated, that the Chinese are basically defensive, reactive, and that they are weak. From that you go on to the thought that the Communist revolution in China was probably not so bad for China after all. That it was probably basically a good thing. And here we see the influence of John Fairbank, under whom I first studied, and who influenced most of the China specialists at that time. He was a professor at Harvard, and the pioneer, the dean of American China specialists in the academic world. And he had the most profound influence on us. He shaped our view that while Mao was a despot and an extremist, and his half-baked schemes had caused suffering, there was another side: the good that had done for China. The great famines, the floods, the horrors of the pre-Communist period were no longer being visited upon China. There were the barefoot doctors bringing at least some medical care to

Library of Congress

places that had never had it for a century or more. Roads and railroads were being built. The country was being held together again. Education again was being advanced. And there I see the genesis of a rather soft, almost apologetic line toward China, which has continued, and which I think characterizes the majority of China specialists even today. This was very pronounced during the Bush Administration, and still is now under the Clinton Administration. I am one of the few, I suppose, who finally broke with that view, and as I can describe later, it cost me an assignment in Peking, because of this policy difference. But there was the beginning of this idea.

Now, it was also during this period when I was in INR that the Chinese became a nuclear weapons state. They exploded their first nuclear device in Lop Nor. And that caused a good deal of alarm and consternation. We were wondering if they were going to proliferate weapons to Pakistan and Africa, and who knows where. I became interested in arms control, and I went over to the Arms Control Agency, which was still brand new. It had its original director, William Foster, and original cast of characters. I offered my services, so to speak. They had no Asia specialist, to say nothing of China specialists, on the staff. At that time, and for many years after, the arms control field in the US government, and certainly in State and ACDA, was dominated by European specialists and experts, and properly and understandably so. But this continued for much too long. In fact, it's only been in the past 8-10 years, where even on the academic side, you have attention to Asian arms control problems. This is quite recent, and long overdue, and I think we've paid a price for it. But anyway, they took me on.

Q: So when did you leave INR?

DREXLER: I left at the end of 1966. I was in ACDA for 1967-68.

Q: I want to stick to INR for a little while. Did you find a divergence of view about the relationship, with the Soviet people as to how they looked at things, the relationship, and where things were going?

Library of Congress

DREXLER: Although we were quartered in the same room, and I had a Soviet specialist as a neighbor in the next cubicle, there was no operational or substantive sharing. Hal Sonnenfeldt was the head of the Soviet part of the INR Sino-Soviet unit. There was another officer there, whose name I can't remember. But Sonnenfeldt was the star, the hard-driving Soviet specialist. We had very little to do with them. Indeed, it was not until the incidents in the late 1960s, early 1970s, the Sino-Soviet border clashes, that we really got together closely and were matching notes. So we were looking in opposite directions.

Q: But here you had a Vietnam War, which was considered all during the war, that the Soviets and the Chinese were as close together as lips and teeth in so far as they were supporting the war. And yet, the Chinese specialists, of which you were one, were reporting out that the Chinese really aren't too supportive of this war.

DREXLER: The Chinese were not behind it. They supported the Vietnamese, but if I understand correctly, Dean Rusk's idea was that the North Vietnamese were a Chinese proxy for Peking's own imperialist designs over Southeast Asia; this was a proxy war on behalf of Peking, which we in INR were convinced was not true.

Q: With this attitude, did you find you were in divergence — obviously you found you were in divergence with the Secretary of State, but how about with the CIA, or the ISA of the Pentagon?

DREXLER: We had a close working relationship with the CIA then, as I did later in Hong Kong, and later in the East Asian bureau. The problem was that the CIA faced the same limitations we did. It had no good sources of information. There were no defectors, there were no moles that were planted there in China. There was, during the first time I was in INR, the first Chinese defector to the US, and the only one that I know of in this period, who came out of Africa. And I remember interviewing him in a CIA safehouse in Arlington somewhere. We, INR and CIA, were playing the same game, working with the same material. This was not a situation in which the CIA people would come up with some hot

Library of Congress

information, or hot scoops. So the differences were perhaps over interpretation of the same People's Daily editorial. You had their China specialists and our's and we would put out these reports, and National Intelligence Estimates, chewing over the same stuff. This has been the case for a very long time. This was in the age before satellites. Later, the satellite program was quite helpful, although not greatly. As for the military, we had a rather low opinion of the analytical abilities of the Defense Intelligence Agency. They seemed to emphasize quantity over quality. They, like us, were poring over the same sort of stuff. So for a People's Daily editorial, you had the INR interpretation, the CIA, and the DIA. The DIA one was one that we, I'm afraid, looked down on. And the level of writing, the level of analysis, was so obviously inferior, that the DIA product was usually discounted. We occasionally ran into problems with DIA representatives in making estimates about whether the Chinese were likely to take some military action. We had, at that time, a Watch Committee which put out a weekly statement for the President and the top Cabinet members in the foreign policy area, of the likelihood of hostilities anywhere in the world, and this was a joint product. You had to have an agreement, or if you didn't, you had to have a footnote showing dissents. The DIA consistently put in footnotes to cover themselves. They always highlighted the worst possible scenario and then signed off. So they lost credibility.

Q: It was a CIA, cover your ass: Everything is fine, except, however, there's always a possibility that the Soviets may strike immediately, or something to that nature.

DREXLER: That's right. That's a very good point you make — the stringing together of qualifying words, “may...probably” was a favorite technique for DIA. So that you got so many conditional phrases that by the time you got to the verb, it could mean anything. The CIA and of course INR language was much more tightly controlled and defined. And we had a superb wordsmith, Allen Evans, a remarkable man, for whom I had great respect, who was in the Front Office in INR in those days and subjected all of our written product to the most careful scrutiny. I think he was English in background and education, and he read our reports as if they were legal documents, so that every word was counted, and we

Library of Congress

had to choose our words that way because he would just kick the stuff back if it wasn't of that caliber. But there was no one in DIA who seemed even interested in doing this. And later I can describe some instances during the crisis when President Park in Korea was assassinated when we got into real trouble because of DIA.

Q: Were you and the CIA in divergence on where things were going?

DREXLER: No, not at that time. Indeed, I can think of only one period, and that was in the late 1970s, where we had a basic difference over the status of Deng Xiaoping. Otherwise, the agreement was pretty close. We knew the fellows there; they knew us. They had an advantage in that they stayed in their jobs. You could have a man following Africa, China in Africa, 5-8 years at a time, whereas none of the Foreign Services officers were in an INR slot for more than 2-3 years. So they had an advantage of continuity. We did have still in INR, at that time, a few old timers, Civil Service employees like Rhea Blue, who had not been RIFed. INR had been drastically cut back in the early 1960s, and had lost a lot of people like the ones I described in the CIA, who had long exposure, long continuity, and institutional memories. But there were a few left. Rhea Blue was one of these. She was a specialist on the Himalayan border area. But we thought what we lacked in continuity we could match with brain power. CIA wouldn't agree, of course, but we thought we didn't do such a bad job.

Q: What was your impression — if you were coming up with rather a different analysis than the Secretary of State one, what was your relationship with the Vietnam working groups, who were dealing with this, and also the role in INR in State policy at that time?

DREXLER: Well, we had in INR at that time a terrific esprit de corps. And part of it was a reflection of the head of INR, who was Tom Hughes, who went on of course, to head the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, a well-known think tank in this area. He had a half hour every morning with the Secretary, which was very important. Typically, a analyst would have a week-long duty, you would get up about 3:45 a.m., get to the

Library of Congress

Department at 4:30 a.m., and be confronted with the evening's take — enormous stacks of material. And if you, like in my case for example, were the briefer that day for East Asia, you had to cover everything from Tasmania to North Korea. It was all there, dumped on your desk. You had to go through it, select things that were worthy of being brought to Hughes's attention, you typed them up on old manual machines that often needed a ribbon or which broke down, with your comment on the event. And then, it was a very stressful thing, because as you were doing this, more and more stuff came in up to the deadline, which I think was about 7:30 a.m., and we all went in then, and sat around with Tom Hughes, who would come in, cool and collected, and look over what we had written. He'd ask us questions about this, and you would have to have the answers, which was, as I say, quite demanding, because you might be a China specialist, but you were trying to analyze something that happened in Indonesia, let's say, or North Korea. So we did fairly well. There was no opportunity, by the way, to call anybody at that hour. You were there on your own, this was understood. So Tom would gather all this stuff together, underline this for the Secretary, that not, and then would dash off — literally run down the hall. So we knew we were getting through to the Secretary. I was, as a junior officer. Of course, naturally we were disappointed that some of our views were not accepted, but I have to say at that time — now we're talking about the mid-'60s — the prospect of collapse in Vietnam was not there. We did not see this. The concerns about the military situation, which later became so grave, were not so then. We did not have a sense at that time of a tremendous struggle within the Administration. We knew that Ball had his own ideas, and as I said, we fed him things. But we were not privy to what was actually going on in the NSC or in the White House. And so we were doing our job, we were feeding in material, we knew it was getting to the Secretary, we knew it was getting to Ball. But we didn't have a high degree of frustration that it wasn't changing policy, because I don't think we felt at that time that there was a need to get out of Vietnam, for example. We were not at that point yet.

Library of Congress

Q: Although you were focused on Vietnam at that time, what was happening in China? Was this the time of the Great Leap Forward?

DREXLER: It was the beginning of the Cultural Revolution, just the beginning. The Great Leap Forward and its damage were past. The Cultural Revolution was taking shape, and we were trying to understand it and to come to terms with it. We had a basic shortage of information on the state of the economy, which was very hard to come by. These were state secrets. We followed, in a fascinated way, the beginning of Mao's purge of Liu Shao-chi, and the people around him, the so-called Capitalist Roaders. And we gave day-by-day reports of the state of play as we could see it. But that was about it. It was almost an academic exercise. There was no sense, I think then, that what was happening within China had any important implications for US policy because we could not detect any debate within China over Vietnam. We knew the Chinese were supporting it; I was monitoring the surface-to-air missiles that China sent in, and where they were being placed in North Vietnam, and so on. But that was about it.

Q: The Great Leap Forward was over, but the damage to that — was that apparent?

DREXLER: No, we didn't really know at that time how severe the economic consequences were because we didn't have the data, the information. We didn't have travelers' reports either. We tried everything. We had a program of — I can't say even now where this took place exactly — but in which we examined correspondence coming from China, between private people. That was opened, looked at, translated, and circulated for the benefit of our China watchers. The radio stations were monitored by FBIS. All of the Chinese language stuff was translated and published in Hong Kong. We were buying documents, we were using the stuff we got from Tibet, leaving no stone unturned. Of course, we were also talking to diplomats from friendly countries who were in Peking. But they were really very much in the dark. It was a very tough business. Of course, we were constantly in touch with academic specialists who faced the same problem. In those years, all of the good books available on modern China would only fill one shelf. Now of course, they would fill a

Library of Congress

room. We knew what was being put out. The China Quarterly was the leading publication for China specialists at that time. We were in touch with the leading academicians, and they with us. But still there was a great unknown there.

Q: You mentioned that later you felt that John Fairbank's view was somewhat pernicious. Did you feel that at the time, or was this a growing unease?

DREXLER: No, I had great respect for him. He was my professor, after all, and his prestige was unchallenged in the field. Indeed, it was only in one of his last books, shortly before he died, that he recognized and acknowledged this himself. But you see, it was a case of the pendulum swinging too far. We were revising a view of China held by ignorant, right-wing extremists in this country, totally at variance with the facts, and which was linked up with the old Yellow Peril ideas, and God knows what all. People were still smarting from our defeat in Korea, at the hands of Chinese forces, and all of that. So, Fairbanks was certainly correct in trying to argue and disabuse people of those ideas which were really pernicious at that time. And I think now no one contests that, and that he was right at that time. I should say that the view I just expressed to you now about Fairbanks and what I think is the excessively soft line, is a minority view, and you will get most China specialists taking issue with me on that.

Q: One thing before we move to ACDA: Watching China in Africa during this time. There was a lot of attention in Africa at this time. These were new countries coming up, and we knew the names of Sekou Toure and Kwame Nkrumah, etc., etc. Today Africa doesn't raise much of a blip on our radar. And China was certainly a very new player in there, as was the Soviet Union. Did you find that you were up against people who were concerned that China was going to do a lot more in Africa at that time?

DREXLER: As you say, Africa loomed very important at that time, it was a cockpit of the Cold War. Also, there was a feeling that there were places in Africa that had mineral wealth, uranium, oil, that was important to us strategically or could be very important if it

Library of Congress

fell into Communist hands. So there was a great deal of concern about that, especially after Zhou En-lai's trip. But the Chinese also became, or tried to be, champions of the non-aligned and the Bandung movement, to which the Africans were very receptive. And it involved, of course, the exclusion of the Soviets, as well as the Americans. So it was kind of a third force, and it had great resonance in Africa at that time. And the Chinese were very good at cultivating these people. So while American officials had an exaggerated view of the potential there for China to sow trouble for us, there was certainly grounds for some concern at that time. It was not wholly exaggerated. The Chinese had a small aid program, but it was sharply focused. They had excellent language training programs. It was taken for granted that when the Chinese Ambassador stepped off the plane no matter where in Africa, he spoke the local African language. I'm not talking about French, say, but the local language very well. And also the Chinese example of Maoism appealed to the Africans in a way that Soviet Communism did not. Like the new African nations, China was a poor country, victim of colonialism, in a way, pulling itself up by its own bootstraps, fighting off imperialism, so there was real resonance.

Q: There's a racial thing there too, because the Soviets were white and the Chinese were not white.

DREXLER: When I finally got a defector — the only one I told you I can remember, from the Chinese embassy in Africa — and I went to talk to him, I asked him, “What did you feel about the Africans?” He said “We looked down on them, we despised them racially.” But he said, “Naturally, of course, this was never made apparent to the Africans, but we had the strong Chinese racial prejudice against blacks.” But what you said before is true. They were colored, and the Chinese tried to capitalize on this.

Q: Did you find that as INR was so downplaying the long-range influence of the Chinese, where there were others in the government saying you don't understand?

Library of Congress

DREXLER: I think not. There was very little expertise on this subject, and it was not so difficult for us to get our more moderate views accepted by officials in Washington. And the interest in the Chinese in Africa flagged rather quickly, and of course in part it was because we had other things to worry about, especially Vietnam.

Q: Also, in interviewing people who served in Africa at various times, one of the remarks would be, "Well, the Chinese had a large mission there. God knows what they were doing." Very seldom was there any real concern about what the Chinese were up to. They seemed to be kind of there, but really an alien...

DREXLER: There is one thing I should mention, and that's the question of Chinese representation in the United Nations. We were, the Administration was determined, of course, to block Peking's admission, and to retain the Nationalist seat in the Security Council and elsewhere. Of course, the African countries were numerous, and they all had votes in the United Nations when they entered. For the Chinese, just to get an embassy there, to get recognition, was important, if not so much as to what happened in Niger or Mali, but at the U.N., because that was one more vote. And of course we know how the momentum built up and what the trend was. We could see that time was not on our side. And the Nationalists at that time did not have the money that they since used in some small countries to buy back recognition, and they had to rely on us. So we fought the Chinese U.N. representation battle in the African theater also. The Chinese communists made some gains there.

Q: Again, I want to keep tapping this one thing. In the China INR side; the Sino side of this, in your hearts of hearts, what was the feeling toward recognition of Communist China by the United States at that time?

DREXLER: As I recall, I personally had no trouble with the idea that Communist China should be kept out of the United Nations. And as I recall, none of my colleagues, senior or my peers, did either. We accepted that policy. Not frequently, but I often had to talk

Library of Congress

and brief groups and make speeches on this subject, and to defend the Administration's policy. And at that time I didn't have any trouble with it. I won't say that it came later, because throughout my career and to this very day I've taken a rather hard-line attitude toward Communist China. I'm not saying that I believe they should now be out of the U.N., certainly not, but I didn't have any difficulty with that in the 1960s. Maybe the fact that I feel that others didn't either is more a reflection of my own views than anything else.

Q: But still, I'm trying to tap this thought. Well, let's turn to ACDA. You were in ACDA from when to when?

DREXLER: I was in ACDA from 1966-68. As I said, it was a newly formed agency, under the Kennedy Administration, with one of the most distinguished American statesmen I ever worked for, William Foster, who was a Republican, former Secretary of Commerce, a multi-millionaire chemical manufacturer, a distinguished and lovable man. He had been named head of the agency to sort of placate persons on the right, who feared that ACDA was going to give away all our weapons and take a soft attitude toward the Soviets. So that was a guarantee that we were not going to give away the store. And he had with him the first generation of American arms control specialists. They were all there and I learned from them. We were on the eve of ACDA's most important historical accomplishment, the Nonproliferation Treaty, and I was fortunate to be named to the delegation and spent over a year in Geneva on the delegation, negotiating the treaty. I was not used as an Asian specialist, really, but on this disarmament committee, which met in Geneva, connected with the U.N., there were 18 nations, 6 Soviet, 6 Western, and 6 neutral. On the delegation I was in charge of liaison with the three least important countries, Burma, Brazil, and Egypt. I believe I failed to get all three to adhere to the treaty. Perhaps Burma adhered to the treaty, but Egypt was waiting for Israel, and of course Brazil was waiting for Argentina, and had its own ideas about peaceful nuclear explosions. It was not necessary for us to get them to sign, but rather to persuade them not to oppose the treaty. It was a great day, when we tabled the joint text with the Soviets, we were the cochairmen with the

Library of Congress

Soviets of this conference, and the tabling of the treaty in early 1968 was really an historic development.

Q: What was the treaty called?

DREXLER: It's the Treaty on the Nonproliferation of Nuclear Weapons. The negotiations were arduous, not only with the Soviets, but with our own allies. And I was horrified as a Foreign Service officer, detailed to ACDA, by the extent to which Foreign Service officers, our ambassadors in Germany, Rome, and in other Western European countries, identified with their host countries, and with their host country's objections to the treaty, and with their host country's feelings that they themselves were giving up too much. It got so that we were almost without representation on this treaty issue in Bonn and Rome, and sometimes we had to use the envoys of governments like Norway, which were really behind the Treaty, to make our case to the host governments. Our embassies were of very little help, and in some cases in ACDA we found that the American ambassadors themselves failed to make forceful presentations to the host country government regarding our positions on the treaty.

Q: Why would the Italians or the Germans — was it just that they wanted to sell equipment off around? What would be their interest in resisting the Treaty?

DREXLER: The Germans, and to some extent the Italians, saw the Nonproliferation Treaty as a means by which the Soviet Union was denying them the right to acquire nuclear weapons. And whether or not they actually had an interest in acquiring such weaponry, they felt that for giving this up, and thus meeting the Soviet foreign policy objective, they required compensation, either in the form of more liberal restrictions on their use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes, or in the form of limits on the Soviets. Our ambassadors sympathized with these views, to the extent that we in ACDA felt that the Administration's policy and positions were not being faithfully portrayed and put forth to the host country governments. I recall one occasion where we had to use the Norwegians, either in Bonn

Library of Congress

or in Rome, I forget, to make sure that the substance of what we were after was conveyed. This came as a great shock to me. We ran into the same opposition in the EUR Bureau, under George Springsteen. And I witnessed fierce battles between ACDA and the EUR Bureau over the treaty. Most of the ACDA personnel at the negotiations were ACDA career employees. I was one of the few State Department Foreign Service people detailed there. So I felt more than embarrassed; I was dismayed and disturbed by the way my colleagues in the State Department handled this very important foreign policy project. But we prevailed with great difficulty, with our allies, and with even greater difficulty with the Soviets, and finally tabled a joint treaty. It was signed and ratified. We were all invited to the signing ceremony at the White House, which is one of the high points in my diplomatic career.

There was an Asian China twist to it, which I want to tell you about, because it's not very well known, and recorded nowhere, but is of some interest. The basic treaty languages were Russian and English, and once the treaty was approved by the UN, endorsed by resolution and in final form, there was a mechanical task making its text conform in the other languages of the UN, namely Spanish, French, and Chinese. I worked on the Spanish translation, first of all, to be sure that it conformed. Then something happened to the head of the Department's Chinese language unit in Language Services, so he was not available to work on the Chinese text, and they sent me to the UN in New York instead to do this. We did not work from scratch, of course, but rather, as in the cases of the other languages, like the Spanish, from a basic text done by the UN interpreters. But the treaty text was highly technical, and the translators at the UN in Chinese, as well as Spanish, did not have this background or expertise. And so, we had to do a lot of work on the basic draft that they gave us. My opposite number from the Soviet Embassy, was Igor Rogochov, whom I encountered later in Moscow, and who is now Russia's Ambassador to China. We worked together on this Chinese text. Now, of course, for me the sensible thing would have been to have someone from the Chinese UN mission with me, but this was the Nationalists; the Soviets would not allow them into the room, or even into the

Library of Congress

same general area where we were working. So when we came to a point in the treaty text where there had to be a change, I would have to leave the room, call the Chinese Mission on the phone, and tell them what the new phrase was. And the first question to me always was, "Did you suggest this, or did the Russians suggest this?" Because they were convinced that if the Russians suggested it, there was something devious there, and that the Russians were bent on putting something in the Chinese version, which would be more binding or tougher on China than, say, for the other parties. And so we labored at this for several days. We were helped by the fact that the technical terminology was already available to us in the Charter and Annexes that set up the International Atomic Energy Agency. The Chinese definition of fissionable materiel and safeguards was already there in the IAEA context, accepted in usage, and so we used that. We were also able to draw on language from the Chinese version of the United Nations Charter, and there we discovered a problem in the text where the Nonproliferation Treaty has a preamble which refers to some of the objectives in the UN Charter. One of them pertains to the use of force, or the non-use of force, rather. We discovered that the Chinese translation of the UN Charter, which had been on the books for 15-20 years, was wrong, and had been incorrectly translated. Nonetheless, we were supposed to quote this passage in the preamble to the treaty. So we were faced with the question of do you quote the Charter language verbatim, even though it's wrong, or do you correct the Charter language when you quote it in the treaty? Well, we made the correction, and we put it in right, and never said anything about it one way or the other. And to my knowledge, the Chinese translation of the UN Charter still has this defect. The Chinese Mission, the Nationalists, later told me that — well, they signed it, they ratified the treaty, so our translation wasn't all that bad. There were some passages that they felt didn't flow quite right, but by and large it was not such a bad job under the circumstances. The State Department gave me as my reward, a copy of the Chinese treaty text, one of very few, of the version that was used for signing, beautifully printed, on heavy paper, which I still have, as my memento of all that work.

Library of Congress

Q: You were still not a senior officer at this time, a mid-career officer. Did you make any attempts to do something about the non-support within the State Department, particularly the EUR Bureau, of getting our Ambassadors to support this, or not?

DREXLER: No, I didn't. We aimed at the objective, which was to get the go ahead from Dean Rusk, the Secretary of State, and for him to get it from the White House. And we had our eyes on this, and we used all means for it. And so we all concentrated on this. I remember the day when Foster was on the phone to the Secretary and he said, "We go then Dean, we go?" And Dean said go, and that was the final go ahead by the Department and the Administration to accept the treaty as we had negotiated it with the Soviets. So for us then the battle against the parochial-minded European specialists in the Foreign Service was won, and I didn't carry it any further.

Q: When this treaty went, were there any reservations about parts of it that concerned our delegation, although every treaty is usually a compromise of some part.

DREXLER: One of the most difficult problems in the treaty concerned peaceful nuclear explosive devices. Because in that era, there was a vision of nuclear explosions being used to reverse rivers, dig oil fields, open up copper mines, build harbors, and so on. These were going to be popping up all over. Of course none of this ever happened, except perhaps in the Soviet Union, but this was a sticking point. It was an unknown technology, and other countries who were behind us in it, and we were not very far advanced ourselves, didn't want to be denied it. It was very hard working with the Atomic Energy Commission people on the delegation to satisfy those countries who wanted to be sure they would get the benefits. Then of course there were a few countries like India and Brazil, who never intended to sign the treaty in the first place, and who probably aspired to become nuclear weapons states, but who used the peaceful nuclear explosive issue as a means of staying out without high political costs internationally. So they used that against us. So that was one thing. But we finessed it, and got a treaty provision providing peaceful nuclear explosion services, but in the end, of course as I said, there was no need for this.

Library of Congress

The technology was not called upon nor developed, and no one wants peaceful nuclear explosions being set off in their neighborhood anywhere. So that was a problem with the Atomic Energy Commission but it was resolved. The other problem was with the Pentagon on a nuclear weapon test ban. We were required and under great pressure from the countries giving up nuclear weapons to commit ourselves to stop testing ourselves. The Pentagon then, as probably now too, was completely opposed to this, and had allies in the Atomic Energy Commission. There were strong differences in the delegation between the Joint Chiefs of Staff, who always had a Colonel on the delegation, and the rest of us. There again, we made a treaty commitment that was artfully worded to resolve the problem. Many of these treaty clauses were very artfully worded. I learned quite a lot about treaty writing from that experience, from our very able lawyers there. And one of the phrases that sticks in my mind which served us so well was "effective measures." You would commit your government to take "effective measures" and then you would fill in the space: general and complete disarmament, world peace, to end testing, to end the arms race, whatever you wanted. The operative words were "effective measures," and that was subject to interpretation. You could label almost anything you didn't like, any specific proposal as not being really "effective," and not serving that purpose, as being misleading or misguided, and so on. So the treaty has many such clauses, and I ran into them, not only in the original, but then in the Spanish and the Chinese as well. So there were those problems. But the basic idea of the treaty, that it was in the United States' interest to stop the proliferation of nuclear weapons, had strong, widespread support, and among public opinion as well, in industry, and bipartisan support. Of course President Johnson was committed to it, and so there was momentum there behind this.

Q: You left ACDA in 1968, and whither?

DREXLER: I went to Hong Kong. By then, Alan Whiting, the head of the Sino part of the Sino-Soviet Affairs in INR, had gotten assigned as the number two in our Consulate General in Hong Kong, which was the center of China watching. He worked there for Ed Rice, who was an old China hand, whose earlier career I'm not familiar with. Undoubtedly

Library of Congress

he had served on the Mainland as a young man, but he was not tarred with the brush that was used against purge victims. But there was an immediate clash of personalities. Mr. Rice, I understand, whom I'd met, felt threatened by Mr. Whiting, this high-powered, celebrated China watcher and specialist, with academic credentials and proven record in INR. The job of number two at the Consulate General was not traditionally one from which you did China watching or supervised it, and so I don't think Mr. Rice expected he was going to get such a person anyway. Alan lasted only a few months, but long enough to get me transferred there to work for him. By the time I got there, he was gone. So I was there for four years, 1968-1972. This was, I like to think, the heyday of China watching. Ed Martin replaced Rice as Consul General, and then David Osborn replaced Martin. None of them involved themselves regularly in our China watching work. We had a China Mainland section. I started at the head of its political unit, and did that for two years, and then I became the chief of the section for two years, and I had 12 officers working for me, and a large staff of 40-50 translators. It was wonderful to be there at that time. We had all the top Asian correspondents of the western American press there, some covering Vietnam, people like Robert Shaplen, who were based out of Hong Kong, Bruce Neelare, Stan Kumpa, all of these people. Plus, all of the leading academic specialists on China came through. We talked to them, got to meet them, exchanged views. The diplomats from Peking came down and talked to us and we to them, and it was a fascinating experience, and for me of course, it was the pinnacle of the China watching overseas operation. I couldn't get beyond that, because we did not have representation in Peking. We briefed an unending stream of Congressmen, military officials, and government officials going through Hong Kong, on China. That was standard, to say nothing of the women's groups and the others who came through and were entitled to this. I gave three or four long briefings a week besides doing writing and reporting. And we were also engaged in the acquisition of documents, which was largely funded by the CIA, and we were able to get some pretty important stuff on the Chinese atomic energy program, among other things.

Q: How did one get documents?

Library of Congress

DREXLER: Well, we didn't have to advertise, because by the time I got there it was known that the US Consulate General would pay for good documents. The Japanese Consulate General would also pay, as would some others. We obviously attracted fraudulent documents, so anything that was offered for sale had to be carefully scrutinized. We thought we were pretty good at doing this, and we watched our money. Sometimes you had to take a chance. For the atomic energy documents, I remember the meeting in which I had to decide whether to recommend this or not. We did recommend, and as I remember we paid something in the order of \$50,000.00. I believe that subsequently the documents were found useful. There was no question that they were authentic, but that was rare. To spend so much money.

Q: You say that the Japanese were paying money. Did you see each other's documents?

DREXLER: No, the Japanese had their own China watchers there in Hong Kong at this time, and they did not have relations with Peking then either. They were driving up the price. So, I met with my opposite number at the Japanese Consulate, and I said, look here, we're interested in the same material. People are playing one of us off against the other to get a lot of money. Why don't we work cooperatively, and share the documents, at least match notes, consult so that we're not being ripped off and so reduce our expenses. In other words, exercise a monopoly or duopoly. He turned me down. The Japanese refused. We met frequently though, to exchange views as all the China watchers did. I had a weekly lunch with the chief German Embassy China watcher, and the Chief British intelligence officer. Once a week we met at a restaurant and talked things over. And sometimes we exchanged documents. I also had a weekly lunch with foreign correspondents. There were endless dinners. You never had to buy your own meal in Hong Kong if you were a China watcher at the American Consulate General. We had a superb relationship with the press. These were very distinguished men, Stan Karnow was there, and others, and we trusted them and they depended upon us. There was, in my experience, only one not too important breach of confidentiality by the press, otherwise the

Library of Congress

working relationship was superb. So while I couldn't bring off the cooperative documents purchasing plan, there was never any obstacle to exchanging views and comments.

Q: I'm not really sure why the Japanese would be so aggressively separate at this point.

DREXLER: I can't account for it. I suppose that my opposite number saw the virtue in cooperation, but was turned down by his superiors. We had at the Tokyo level very slight exchanges with them. I went up to Tokyo once or twice, mostly to brief our embassy there on what was going on in China, and I had a couple of meetings with the China specialists in the Japanese Foreign Ministry. But I found their people very stiff and inhibited, and not really very forthcoming or interested in sharing information with us. I think that they felt that there were real limits on the commonality of interest between American officials and the Japanese officials when it came to China. Probably they had their own agents and operatives on the Mainland, their own access, I don't know. They certainly had their own experiences in China. So I had the sense that they looked at China rather differently from us. They calculated their interest as not being entirely congruent with our's. This was not the case, say, with the Germans, the French, the English, the Canadians, the Norwegians, and so on. We were all in the same game together. But the Japanese had their own game going.

Q: What did we see in China during this 1968-72 period?

DREXLER: The Cultural Revolution had led to chaos. It was at that time that Mao called in the Army to restore order, and formed local units of government, revolutionary committees, in which the armed forces component was dominant. He also turned to his close comrade in arms and designated successor, Lin Biao, also. The downfall of Liu Shao-chi, and the other targets of the purge which Mao had in mind when he unleashed the revolution, the crushing of the spirit of bureaucratism and so on, all those goals had by then been achieved. But at a cost which Mao felt, and people around him felt should not be sustained. So they were beginning then to draw in the reins and bring the revolution

Library of Congress

to an end, and reestablish the purified successor generation to Mao, as embodied in Lin Biao. So we watched this take place. The one thing I modestly credit myself with was being the first to detect that Lin Biao himself had been purged. We saw that something strange was going on. There were, as we used to call them, anomalies in the press, in appearances, and there was great disorder involving Mao's wife, Jiang Qing, and the Shanghai radicals around her. We were all puzzled about this, until finally, it seemed to me that there was only one explanation, which was unthinkable almost, that Lin Biao, Mao's designated successor, his closest comrade in arms, was finally going to be purged, and that the whole succession scheme was off. I took my telegram about this up to David Dean, who was my superior at that time as Deputy Principal Officer. He questioned me about it, and we sent it off. We were the first. We were ahead of CIA, all of the other agencies in reaching this conclusion that Lin had fallen. And it wasn't until weeks after that the Chinese themselves confirmed it. So that was a big satisfaction for me personally. But then of course there came the great breakthrough, the Nixon and Kissinger visit, when I became very alienated from Washington's policy toward China. From the Nixon-Kissinger approach, that's when I started to back off.

Q: While you were there, were these various groups that you would brief, they would essentially be public groups. What were we saying about China at that time?

DREXLER: We gave them an accurate picture, of course, of the internal turmoil. China at this time was very much introspective. The action was all on the domestic scene, the Cultural Revolution. While they were feuding with the Soviets, and also with us and helping Vietnam, it was remarkable that they were able to maintain this revolutionary campaign at the same time. It was a China dominated by domestic political turmoil. And that's what people focused on and what we briefed visitors about, to help them puzzle out what was going on inside China. Because as far as the Sino-Soviet split was concerned, and Vietnam, our visiting groups more or less knew what that was all about already. But what was going on inside China and what the Cultural Revolution was all about that

Library of Congress

was a mystery that we could try to unravel for them. Then of course, after the Nixon and Kissinger visit...

Q: When did that visit take place?

DREXLER: This would be 1971, I guess, 1971-72, around then. Then we had a stream of people. Erlichman came through, and I briefed him. George Shultz too. At that time I think he was OMB Chief, or maybe Secretary of Labor. Frank Shakespeare, the head of USIS, Admiral McCain was frequently in from CINCPAC, Secretary of Treasury Kennedy, the Chicago banker, came through. It was endless. Especially after the breakthrough and ping-pong diplomacy led to more contacts. Some of the people who went up were woefully uninformed. Secretary of the Treasury Kennedy's questions and background knowledge were so poor that his own staff was visibly embarrassed as we sat around the table and he threw these dumb questions at me, but off he went. Erlichman and Shultz didn't say very much. They were good listeners.

Q: John Erlichman was on the White House staff.

DREXLER: That's right, with Haldeman, he was one of the two chief aides of the President. It was also at this time that the Chinese released some long-held American prisoners from the 1950s. The first one I received, unfortunately, after he died. His ashes, I can still see them. I was told that he had committed suicide. This was Hugh Redman. He had committed suicide and the Chinese were going to send us his ashes, and I expected a small urn. Instead I got an enormous package, about two feet long and one foot square, with a muslim covering and the large letters of his name on the side. And this was set on my desk, perfectly horrible. The Chinese told us he committed suicide, after being held for 20 years, with a razor blade in a Red Cross package. The Red Cross told us they never put razor blades in their packages. Then we got word that they would release a live prisoner, Fecteau. These were men who had parachuted while conducting CIA clandestine

Library of Congress

operations at the time that the Mainland fell to the Communists and who were captured and held for over 20 years.

There was Downey, Redman, and Fecteau. Redman was dead and they told us they were going to put Fecteau across the Hong Kong border at Lo Wu. So I was designated to receive him. The RAF provided the helicopter and took us to the closed border area, which was strictly off limits. We were escorted by a detail of Gurkhas to the bridge, where Fecteau was going to be put across. We knew that there was one train down from Canton, and we waited for it and he didn't show. At the border, in addition to the Gurkhas at the bridge, there was an enormous machine, looking something like those around here that are used to vacuum up leaves in the fall. But this was to spray a banana paste across the bridge in case the Chinese tried to rush across, this gooey stuff would be sprayed from this enormous machine with the great pipe, to coat the whole bridge with banana paste, so that the Chinese would then slip and fall while the Gurkhas went out to attack them. Of course that never happened. But we sat and waited, but there was no Fecteau. I had with me a US Army Colonel, who was one of our attach#s and a British military doctor. The doctor was there in case Fecteau was in bad health, but I think also that we had in mind that if Fecteau was going to become difficult, we might have to require the doctor to tranquilize him, because the CIA wanted him taken quietly and quickly by helicopter directly to the RAF part of the Hong Kong airport where there was a C-130 waiting to take him to Manila, Clarke Air Force Base. But there was no Fecteau. So we went to have lunch, and when we came back from our lunch there he was. The Chinese had insisted on giving him lunch at their little canteen at the border before putting him across, after holding him for over 20 years. And there he was, a big strapping fellow in very good health, but totally docile. And far from providing us with any trouble or needing any tranquilizers, he needed stimulus. That is, I took him over to the helicopter, and I said, "Mr. Fecteau, this is the helicopter we've laid on to take you to the air base, and then on to Manila." And he wouldn't move, until I told him to get onto the helicopter and then sit down. The poor man, after all this imprisonment, had been conditioned to such an extent, that he would not make an obvious

Library of Congress

physical move until told, even by an American friendly officer. With him was a young girl, a mystery girl, who had been put across with him. She told me that she had set off with a boyfriend from Hong Kong a year before and had sailed to Manila. They had been washed ashore, held in a Chinese village. Her boyfriend starved to death, because digestive problems made it impossible for him to eat what the Chinese provided, and she had his passport and a few things with her. So I asked who she was, and she told me her name and the story I just related to you. She and her boyfriend had of course dropped off the face of the earth, and had been presumed dead for over a year. And I offered to call her father...

Q: She was Occidental, I take it.

DREXLER: She was an American citizen, and so was the boyfriend. She had his passport. The Chinese had never told us about holding her, nor alerted us that she was going to come across with Fecteau. I offered to phone her father in the US, but she said no, he had heart trouble, and he'd probably have a heart attack if he learned suddenly that she was alive after all. So I got her on the plane that was there for Fecteau, and sent her off to Clarke Air Force Base, and that was the last I ever saw or heard of them again. Fecteau, of course, said nothing to us, nor did we put anything to him, since obviously he was physically fit. I often thought that he might write a book about his experiences, but as far as I know, he didn't.

One further point, the previous Kissinger visit came as a total surprise to us at the Consulate General.

Q: Were you all seeing things in the tea leaves on the Chinese side that they were doing something to make the situation

DREXLER: We did not see this, but back in Washington, in INR, an officer and old friend of mine, Lynn Pascoe, strictly on content analysis and looking at editorials and so on, judged that some important positive shift in relations with the United States was in the

Library of Congress

offing. He deserves great credit for this and is the only one who spotted anything like that. Of course, it was not clear from that what this would exactly entail, namely a Nixon and Kissinger visit. It came not only as a surprise to me, but also as a shock. I thought it was very badly handled, that the terms in the Shanghai communique would come to haunt us, as the Shanghai communique has come to haunt us now these days. But this egocentric Nixon visit to China was done under terms which I think the Chinese regarded as the same way the emperors used to regard tribute bearers. It was self effacing, almost self-humiliating, almost groveling on our part. That's how it looked to me then, and I was very disturbed by what had happened. I count this as a further progression in my disenchantment with the prevailing line among China specialists and among government specialists on what we should do about China. My colleagues were by and large elated by this development (the Nixon visit and the diplomatic breakthrough), and of course in terms of our careers we saw the prospect then of serving in China, and of having our China watching made immeasurably easier and more fascinating by service there. But in terms of American interests and how to deal with the Chinese, and how they perceived us, I thought we were the losers.

Q: Was this at the time that this developed?

DREXLER: That was my immediate reaction. I was appalled at what they did.

Q: Looking at Mao, at that time—here you had this Cultural Revolution and you were beginning to see the consequences of many of these actions. What was your analysis of Mao? Was this like Stalin trying to stay in power, making sure he was in power, or was it for the greater good of the Chinese? What did you see motivating him?

DREXLER: We thought of him as the greatest Chinese of the 20th century. An outstanding historical figure of unmatched importance in modern Chinese history. Sun Yat-sen, Chang Kai-shek, of course also made their mark, but they were failures. What Mao achieved, bringing a country of over 1 billion people under control, not only of his party, but almost

Library of Congress

under his personal control, was an astonishing achievement. To watch the man at work, to hear the crowds and see their adulation of him, to be bombarded as we were constantly in Hong Kong by Mao's thought and the little red book, and so on, we noted that we were in the presence of an historic phenomenon. We were also, of course, aware of his shortcomings, that he was authoritarian, and an oriental despot. We were aware of those faults. But we felt that by and large the Chinese people were behind him, that he had that sort of legitimacy; he had not lost, as the Chinese say, "the mandate of heaven." And so I think this was the same idea that Kissinger had when he was ushered into the Mao presence. This was not your ordinary Chinese restaurateur or laundry man. You were in the presence of a great man, flaws and all. And so that's what we thought about him. I must say that the inside story of his personal life has become known only last year, when his physician wrote his memoirs. It's an astonishing account of Mao's sexual depravity and loathsome personal habits and so on. This was a side to him that you have to add to his other despotic behavior and he now of course looks quite different. But that's what we thought then. He was an historic phenomenon, a great man.

Q: One has the picture of the China watchers jumping up and down, gee, things are going to happen, and you sitting there scowling. How did your unhappiness or unease with the development take?

DREXLER: It cost me an assignment that would have been the pinnacle of my Foreign Service career as a China specialist. But that was a little later. The Nixon visit came toward the end of my tour, and I was then going back to the Arms Control Agency to a good job in Geneva. But, if I can go ahead just a little bit, I was out of the China field for three years in Geneva, and then out of it for three years in Bogota, when I was DCM. And at the end of my service in Bogota, Carter had become President, and had named Leonard Woodcock as ambassador and head of the liaison office in Peking. I don't know who was the DCM when Woodcock got there, but the man's assignment was up, and they were searching for a replacement. At that time, I was a front runner, because I was the only China specialist who had experience as a DCM running a large embassy with

Library of Congress

constituent posts. In Colombia we had three Consulates, and in China we were going to get more. I was a China specialist, I had the right rank, and so on, and finally they whittled down the list and I was asked to fly from Bogota to Washington for just a two-hour final interview with Ambassador Woodcock. He was an American labor union leader, and a very fine man. I liked him. I think he did well. However, before I went up, he had made a speech, a public speech, being back in Washington on consultations, and to pick his DCM, and in this speech he advocated a very soft, accommodating line toward China that went so far that the State Department felt obliged to disavow it, and say that it was his personal view. We did not know at the time that Carter was actually preparing to break relations with the Nationalists, to break the security treaty with Taiwan and have full diplomatic relations with Peking at the ambassadorial level. Undoubtedly Woodcock knew this but he got out ahead on his own. In my interview, everything went very well for the most part. And then we got to matters of policy, and I said to Ambassador Woodcock that I had to in all frankness tell him that I disagreed with the position that he had taken about a more liberal line toward China, and that I felt that he and I should really discuss this openly before I was assigned and got there, because this was going to be a continuing issue and as his DCM I would feel obliged after all these years to raise my own views and challenge his. He thanked me for my frankness and we ended the interview in a friendly way. I went back to Bogota. And when I got back in Bogota a few days later, I was called by Harry Thayer, the China Office Director, who told me that I had lost the assignment. So that was it for me, I lost it. And I was told that this was because of the policy difference. But curiously, years later when the Reagan administration came into office, this affair got me a job back in the EAP bureau, with Paul Wolfowitz, who at that time was the Assistant Secretary. I won't go into that in any detail. But when Paul, who was a very conservative person, as was the President, of course, interviewed me for an office directorship in his Bureau, I could tell the effect that I had on him when I told him the story I just related now, about how my harder line on China had affected my career. And so he gave me the job right off. And he and I were of one mind during that part of the Reagan administration, of the need to take

Library of Congress

a tougher line toward China. But there again he, to say nothing of me, failed to halt the pressures toward accommodation.

Q: We'll probably touch on both of those later, but you went back to ACDA, and when were you there?

DREXLER: I was given ACDA's only permanent overseas post, the one that they funded. I was Counselor for Arms Control, a kind of political counselor to the US Mission to the United Nations in Geneva, for three years, from 1972-1975. Idar Rimestad was the Perm Rep, and then Francis Dale, a political appointee. So I was ACDA's man there, I had the rank of Counselor, and I was also named the Deputy US Representative to the UN sponsored Conference of the Committee on Disarmament (CCD), which was in session about 8 months of the year, two sessions a year. I was also detailed to the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, the CSCE, as the US Representative in the military basket, the military subcommittee. The Pentagon initially opposed my being named representative there, because they didn't want an ACDA man, but when they found out that I was not really an ACDA man, but a Foreign Service officer, that made me slightly more acceptable, so finally they agreed. So I worked on the CSCE, as well as the Disarmament Conference for three years. Unfortunately, while we made great progress at the CSCE, which was an important negotiation, which results that are still working very well for us, we made no progress on the disarmament side, the arms control side. We were in a defensive, in a holding posture, because the Nixon administration was not inclined to enter into any more arms control agreements there, apart from SALT talks. These bilateral, US-Soviet SALT negotiations were separate from us at the Disarmament Conference and were closely controlled by private back channel by Kissinger. The Nixon Administration was not interested in the work of the CCD, so we had to constantly explain to the other CCD delegations why we couldn't have a test ban, why we couldn't have a chemical weapons treaty, why we couldn't do this or that. It was not a very good time to be there, but we did make some progress on the chemical weapons treaty, and that has finally come into effect, though modified considerably from what we had in mind

Library of Congress

originally. But the work on the CSCE I found very satisfying, and the one point that I would want to make about it is that we were constantly knocked off balance by Mr. Kissinger's behind-the-scenes negotiations with the Soviets, negotiations that he conducted without keeping our CSCE delegation in Geneva informed. So that frequently the delegation would follow instructions and take positions — sometime forceful positions — only to be told by an infuriated Soviet delegate that Mr. Kissinger had already privately disavowed to them the positions we had just expressed. So the Soviets, I think, took delight, as well as tactical advantage, in this, and I felt this particularly in the military committee when we were negotiating confidence building measures. Because of this behind-the-scenes maneuvering with the Soviets by Kissinger we were suspected by our NATO allies, with whom we were supposed to be working together. I often had to go to NATO in Brussels when we would have consultations on the joint alliance posture to be taken in Geneva, and I would be given impossible instructions from Washington, which we knew were the result of deals Kissinger had made behind the scenes with the Russians, and which we somehow had to force down on our allies, who suspected us—rightly—of colluding with the Soviets behind their backs. So that negotiation left a bitter taste in my mouth, as far as Mr. Kissinger is concerned. But nonetheless, it was brought off, and I think the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe was successful from the long-range Western point of view.

Q: You know, I had an interview with George Vest some time ago. And he was in Helsinki working on this, and said that he would sometimes hear from the Norwegian who had heard from the East German, who had heard from the Soviet, that Kissinger was undercutting him. His impression was that Kissinger really was not the prime mover in the CSCE, but Kissinger really was somewhat dismissive of the CSCE, whereas he was more concerned about SALT and all. Did you get that feeling?

DREXLER: The Helsinki meeting was one of the early phases of the CSCE, and then they moved to Geneva, and, I forget, the CSCE may have been concluded later in New York. But George Vest came to Geneva, and I worked for him, and I have great respect

Library of Congress

for him. He was close to Kissinger, of course, he had been his press spokesman for a while. I agree that no doubt the SALT negotiations were more important to Kissinger than the CSCE, and more important in every respect, to us too. Also going on were the MBFR talks, the Mutual Balance of Force Reductions, in Vienna, with Ambassador Jonathan Dean there heading our delegation. We tried to liaise with them occasionally, but not with much success. The CSCE was not looked upon as very important. As an arms control measure, it wasn't. But what was important about the CSCE was the human rights basket, and it can be argued that our success, the delegation's success in getting the Russians to subscribe to this, led to the human rights exchanges and openings which helped bring down the Soviet regime. That was very important. But that was not one of Kissinger's interests. My criticism, my quarrel with Mr. Kissinger is not on his priorities, but his style, and his allowing a situation to come about where his delegation seemed to be betraying the Western allies there, and where we were kept in the dark. This was not in our national interest. As for his purposes of downplaying the CSCE to make sure that it didn't interfere with the more important SALT game going — this could have been achieved in a more statesman-like and creditable way. I thought myself that this was further proof that Mr. Kissinger for his brilliance, his knowledge of history, and his other qualities, had many weaknesses of character. That is still my view.

Q: By the time you left in 1975, where did things stand?

DREXLER: The CSCE agreement was nearing completion. The CCD arms control talks were bogged down, and Nixon had resigned, of course. The disarmament conference there in Geneva was largely preoccupied with protecting the nonproliferation treaty, because the treaty had a clause which required a periodic review conference. All the parties get together and look at it every five years to see if its purposes are being met. So, we had a conclave in Geneva in which the non-aligned could hold our feet to the fire. They could charge that we didn't give peaceful nuclear explosive devices, we didn't stop nuclear testing, we kept building up our arsenals. We're still engaged in the mad arms race, and we were doing this sort of thing. So we had, as we did every review conference afterward,

Library of Congress

until the one a couple of years ago, to preserve the treaty from attack and we succeeded. I was the Secretary General of the US delegation for the first review conference, and we brought it off. But those were three bleak years in which we were on the defensive in Geneva, as far as the U.N. and multilateral arms control negotiations were concerned.

Q: Before we leave this section, what was your initial feeling, and maybe of the delegation around you, about human rights? This was before human rights became a major effort on the part of the United States, which came with the Carter Administration. How was the human rights element of the CSCE, was this just one of many?

DREXLER: It was one of the so-called baskets. There were three major categories of negotiations: military, the one that human rights was in (I think it was called by that name), and then there was an economic one, as I recall. There were separate teams from each delegation working on these, and I was the representative on the military committee, so I was not able to follow the human rights side very much. But there was unanimity in the delegation, and certainly with our allies, that this was something that we should press for, because it was clearly directed at the Soviet Union, and in opening up the Soviet Union. It did not yet become, a more broad international cause, involving us with noncommunist governments, or nonadversary governments. So we were all behind that effort, although I was not involved in those negotiations in detail.

I should say one other point there that the Ambassador, and Permanent US Representative in Geneva, was Idar Rimestad, when I arrived. He got that job as a reward, finally, after a long career in the administrative management side of the Department. He had no role to play, nor did it bother him. He just relaxed and took it easy. The rest of the staff at our Mission in Geneva did not have very strong affection for him.

Q: I've had some accounts from his time in Moscow, with almost vitriolic...

DREXLER: He didn't bother with me very much, except I recall the only contact I really had with him was one day he came into my office with a yardstick, and began to measure my

Library of Congress

file space, something that you would not expect an ambassador to do himself, but which was clearly up his alley, one of his talents. And he measured all of these file cabinets, because we had the whole history of US negotiations in the disarmament field going back 15-20 years, and this was the repository. But he thought it was too much, and would I please get rid of most of it. Well, we didn't. But he was then succeeded by Frank Dale, a political appointee, owner of the Cincinnati Reds. He was also the publisher of the Cincinnati Enquirer. Anyway, a fine man, a great gentleman. We all liked him, he was very bright and active. But his problem was that there was nothing for the Permanent Representative to do, because if there was something important going on, ambassadors were sent from Washington. And sometimes we had five or six ambassadors there at one time, which put a great strain on the motor pool, I can tell you, when they all needed to have a limousine at roughly the same time. Dale was popular with the Swiss, and he established a good relationship with some of the international organizations there, like the International Red Cross and the ILO, where he had more freedom for maneuver. But it's a tough job for any ambassador to have, and a rather unusual one. I think it's gone to career people and political appointees in more or less an even measure. But if you are going there in that job, it helps to like skiing, or something of that sort, otherwise you'll find it a little trying.

Then the Department phoned me and wanted to send me to the Senior Seminar, and I said I really didn't want to do that. And instead, I was "gloped" to Bogota.

Q: Back to your origins?

DREXLER: Yes, except that it was not viewed that way by some others. I got a very frosty reception in the ARA Bureau. I had taken away one of their choice slots. The fact that I'd been in Barranquilla years before was forgotten. I was an ACDA and China man, and I was given no briefings by ARA in Washington. I went from Geneva to Bogota with five days in Washington, not offered so much as a cup of coffee by ARA. The Office Director, Frank Devine, said, "There are the file cabinets with the cables, Bob. If you want to read

Library of Congress

them, read them.” Of course there were not the sensitive ones there. Nothing was set up for me, except for DEA and USIA. And I went off. Of course, I got the assignment, benefitting from GLOP, the program supported by Kissinger to keep officers from spending too much time in one region of the world. And he had the ARA bureau in mind, I believe, because it is the most inbred, insular of all the bureaus, and I was really an outsider. This harmed me, because I found that in the bureau there was an inattention to Colombia, which I could not compensate for by any personal relations. I had no old pals in ARA that I could call. In the China field, in Asia, everybody knew everybody. We knew what everyone's strong and weak points were, and you could get on the phone and work things out. I was at a loss in ARA. They had no reason to have any confidence in me, and I could not get through to them. And this was a problem, because one office was responsible in the Department, it was called North Coast Affairs, for both Venezuela and Colombia. And clearly Venezuela was number one to the head of that office. Those were the years of the oil crises, and Venezuela of course had oil. During the three years I was DCM, 1975-78, neither of the two office directors ever set foot in Bogota, nor did the desk officer, nor did any Deputy Assistant Secretary, Luers, or Frank McNeil, except Luers came once briefly accompanying Kissinger on a trip.

Q: This might be a good place to stop.

Q: Today is the 19th of March, 1996. Bob, we're off to Colombia. First of all, what did the Drug Enforcement Agency, which was relatively new at this period say to you. It wasn't the powerhouse it now is.

DREXLER: Yes it was. They showed much more interest in my assignment to Bogota than the ARA bureau did. So I for the first time realized that drug enforcement might be an important part of my job. But even with the DEA briefing, I didn't think it was going to be the major concern. And when I arrived in Bogota, it was not in fact a major concern of the Ambassador.

Q: By the way, had the desk said anything about drugs?

DREXLER: No, I did not really talk to them about that. I was also sobered by a briefing by Security, who told me about the security risks in Bogota, which I hadn't known about since I'd come from Geneva, and that I couldn't drive my own car; that I would have bodyguards 24 hours a day, and wherever I went that my house was under special protection, and so it was. I had an armored car, a policeman with a submachine gun in the front seat, and when I was in charge there was a follow-up car with four more bodyguards behind. When I got to Bogota I was issued a riot gun, which was an automatic sawed-off shotgun, and a .38 caliber pistol. All of this was laid out for me by SY, which also had a sobering effect. When I got to Bogota, I was welcomed by the Ambassador at the airport. I'm surprised that he chose me, although he probably had to take someone from outside of ARA under the GLOP program. I did not know him, nor he me. He was Viron "Pete" Vaky, an outstanding diplomat. I replaced Robert White, who went on to become ambassador to Paraguay and El Salvador, and a very outspoken liberal minded expert on Latin America. He has a very strong personality, and I was told that Ambassador Vaky was looking for a DCM with a less strong personality, sort of vanilla flavored DCM, and I guess I filled that prescription. But anyway, he welcomed me and my wife, and we developed a very good working relationship, and I had and have great respect for him. At that time, the embassy was mostly concerned with trade and aid issues. There are always trade problems, having to do with quotas, and reduction of duties, and so on. In the case of aid, we had a very large AID mission because Colombia had been one of the pilot countries for the Alliance for Progress in the 1960s. The Colombians loved planning, and that sort of thing, and they had experienced a number of different US AID mission strategies for development. At the time I arrived, the AID mission was very large. In fact, it occupied the whole former embassy, from which we moved out when the new chancery was built. The Embassy was also concerned with crime problems — kidnaping in particular, because the American citizen vice-president of Sears was being held by kidnappers when I arrived. This was a common Colombian crime. I myself narrowly escaped them a couple of years later. I found

Library of Congress

the DEA mission in the basement, in a crowded office which had formerly been the senior officers' dining room, off the cafeteria. It was headed by a Cuban-American, and he had about four other officers, and their job was to train the Colombians in controlling narcotics traffickers. They themselves could not engage, of course, in any police-type missions, or enforcement or interdiction operations, and they had a small budget and were making small progress in training the Colombians. But this was not one of our major concerns at that time. Shortly after I arrived, I went with the Ambassador to present the AID mission's grand new aid plan for the coming year or the coming years, to the Minister of Finance. He shocked us by saying, in effect, thank you, we don't want your AID mission anymore. We appreciate it but you can close your shop and go home. The Ambassador was totally surprised by this...

Q: I'm surprised there hadn't been emanations or something.

DREXLER: That's right. It shows how out of touch our AID people were. They were shocked, and AID in Washington was offended that the Colombians would do such a thing. The Colombians said that they felt that they could go it on their own; they had their own plans, they were grateful for what we had done for them over the past 12 years or so. About six months after I arrived, Ambassador Vaky was transferred to Caracas and replaced by Phillip Sanchez, a Republican political appointee who had been Ambassador in Tegucigalpa. On arrival Sanchez told us he wanted me to manage the Embassy's operations while he devoted himself to "policy matters." In practice, he did virtually nothing. I later learned from our Regional Security Officer that they had some concerns about Ambassador Sanchez from his previous tour in Honduras, but they never alerted me to this until it was too late. We could have coasted along that way. As I said, the White House didn't mind whether Sanchez did anything or not, the Bureau didn't mind, the staff was not very happy, but we were all doing the best we could. But then the drug problem arose, and this made the arrangement with such an Ambassador intolerable, and very damaging.

Library of Congress

I should explain that the drug cartels, as we came to know them, were formed at this time. The mid-1970s were the formative time. Before that time, marijuana had been the main drug industry. About 70% of all the marijuana coming to the United States came from Colombia, the northern part. But then, the market switched to cocaine. The two Colombian entrepreneurs were Carlos Lehder and Fabio Ochoa who made common cause with the Medellin underworld. There had always been a highly developed underworld in these big cities, counterfeiters, kidnappers, and so on. And they began to form the infamous Medellin Cartel, to get a monopoly over the supply side. We saw that this was happening; DEA saw that this was happening, and tried to encourage the Colombian police to crack down on them, but it was impossible for me to go to the Colombian president, or to deal with Cabinet ministers. In the first place, Bogota was highly protocol conscious, very snobbish, and this was something, quite properly of course, for the Chief of Mission to do. And, in fact, it would have been regarded as a slighting if someone less than the Chief of Mission tried to go off to see a person of higher rank. But Sanchez had not developed any rapport with the president nor his top officials. So we did not have that high-level access that we needed to give orders to the Colombian police to alert them to the problem and to begin to take cooperative measures with us. Even if Vaky had still been there, it would have been tough, because as I said, President Lopez's mindset was against getting together with us on a new aid venture. More basically he felt, with reason, that this was an American problem in its origin. That you should curb it on the demand side, and any help he was going to give us was going to be a special favor, and if we wanted help, we would have to pay for it, provide the means and all of the equipment. So we tried to get this, but it was very tough, and such programs as we had going made some progress, but not much. Meanwhile, this very large operation that I had been briefed on in Washington by DEA, was initiated and was a colossal flop, because the drug traffickers had already penetrated the Peruvian, Bolivian, Ecuadoran, and Colombian law enforcement agencies involved. And it was easy to do, since so many countries and people were taking part. So this had failed. We tried to warn the Colombians that this drug trafficking would pose a danger to them too, and we got USIA to make a film which was designed to show how

Library of Congress

they might become consumers of cocaine, just as Americans were. We misjudged the threat to Colombia. That is, we thought that it was going to be a spread of addiction, when instead it was the spread of corruption in the country. The film was shown, but it didn't do much good, and we weren't doing much good.

I should say also that the State Department then began to give more attention to the narcotics problem, and for the first time named a Special Assistant to the Secretary for Narcotics Coordination, Sheldon Vance, the Ambassador who passed away recently. He was behind the first efforts we made to organize our selves better to fight narcotics. A mid-career Foreign Service officer was named to be the Narcotics Coordinator at our Bogota Embassy. He reported to me, as did the DEA people. And we tried to work out a anti-narcotics country plan, and concert our efforts, and then work with the Colombians. The DEA people were restive under this arrangement. They didn't like to be supervised by Foreign Service officers, but we more or less saw eye to eye on the Colombian problem. They didn't like the money being in State Department hands, although there weren't major differences over its use, but rather there was never enough of it. And the DEA people were sometimes anxious themselves to get into some of the enforcement operations; they couldn't resist going after some of these guys when they saw what they were up to, since it was aimed at American markets, and the Colombians weren't doing much to stop the trafficking. So I had tensions with the Special DEA Agent in charge over this to be sure that he and his agents kept back and did not get caught up in gun fights or missions in Colombia, which were really against the law. And I had an argument with the Special Agent one morning on this. That afternoon, my wife who was at home, heard screams from an anguished and terrified woman coming over the security radio network that linked all of our Embassy houses and offices. And this woman said that she was trapped and had locked herself in the closet in the DEA office and that a killer was rampaging through the place and was after her. My wife, of course, was appalled to hear this and she got me on the phone and we all listened, and the trapped woman didn't know whether to shout or to keep her voice down. She said, "Oh my God, he's trying the door, he's coming..."

Library of Congress

and so on. We learned that there had been shooting at the DEA office, which by then had moved across the street from the embassy, in office space in a commercial building. We asked that Colombian police be sent, but they refused to go, because they said it was diplomatic property. The Marines went over, and took the elevator to the top floor where DEA was located. The Gunnery Sergeant stepped off and was confronted by a man who had an automatic pistol aimed at him and said, "Get out of here, my quarrel is not with you." So the Gunnery Sergeant retreated, brought more Marines over, and they came up the stairways and the fellow with the gun realized that he was trapped, and he put his pistol in his mouth and killed himself. By that time he had murdered Octavio Gonzalez, the Special Agent in charge, which was a terrible shock to us all. We finally got the Colombian police to come after it was all over, but it took some time to recover from this.

Q: What was the genesis of this?

DREXLER: We never knew. The assassin was an American. We think that he was an informant, probably, that DEA had probably found him no longer useful or undependable, and that led to a dispute between the two, at a time when the Special Agent was alone in his office. Having moved to this new building, they had less than adequate security arrangements, not even metal detectors at the door at that time. They probably had a quarrel, Octavio was murdered, and then, as I said, the fellow then killed himself. It is possible that the assassin didn't mean to survive, because we found in his hotel room, that he had piled all his clothes up neatly, and left a farewell note to his father. Typical of the situation I faced, that very night Ambassador Sanchez was due to leave for Barranquilla to reopen the Consulate formally. It had been closed just before I got there, it was my original post in the Foreign Service, of course, and then we had to open it at great expense again because it was needed, especially in the drug war. But Ambassador Sanchez wanted to stay in Bogota to console Gonzalez's widow, who was distraught. And among my many concerns then was to get Ambassador Sanchez out of Bogota and up to Barranquilla, not only because he had an important function to perform there to open the Consulate, but I wanted him off my hands and out of the way while I dealt with this killing. So I

Library of Congress

finally persuaded him to leave and was able to attend to the matter without detracting from Sanchez. So this was an example of how I was obliged to operate with such an Ambassador. Interestingly, the Colombians never sent any condolence message, not a wreath, not an expression of interest even, in Gonzalez's assassination. Only some months later, when we had an altercation with the Colombian President over a kidnaped Peace Corps volunteer, did the President send us a message, in which he pointed out that the killer of Gonzalez was an American, which, he thought just went to show that drug trafficking was an American problem. So that's how the situation dragged on. We were not able to really work out any good cooperation with the Colombians while Sanchez was there. The Ambassador was, of course, concerned as he saw the drug problem growing. He was shocked, of course, by the killing of the DEA agent. But he did not involve himself directly in our efforts to change the situation. His status and standing in the community fell continually, and I became rather distressed by this situation.

The Ambassador began to act strangely. He told me that he wanted to fire the butler at his Residence, who had almost a quarter century of loyal service, because he suspected that the butler was taking kickbacks from suppliers. It would have surprised me only if he hadn't been doing this, because, well, it was one of those local practices, but he was an expert person, and the Vakys had thought highly of him. I said to Sanchez, well, of course if you want to fire him we'll have to let him go. But without telling the Ambassador, I kept the man on the payroll by bringing him into the General Services section and finding a little job for him so that he didn't lose his pension or have his heart broken. I offered then to go to the employment services to find a replacement, and the Ambassador said that he had found one already. It was the head gardener, a personable young man, whom he promoted to be butler at the Residence. We were astonished by this, and it was not only surprising in an ordinary sense, but even in the Colombian social sense.

To put a man who was a gardener over the staff of an Ambassadorial Residence created, even within the working class of Colombians, all sorts of problems of status. Nonetheless, the Ambassador went ahead with this. The boy was bright, and he tried hard, but of course

Library of Congress

he wasn't a butler. It perhaps didn't matter too much, since the Ambassador did not give any formal entertainment, but before long, the Ambassador had changed the whole staff there at the embassy. I, of course, did not involved myself in this, I had too many other things on my mind, and I didn't pay careful enough attention to it, nor draw the proper conclusions. Anyway, the Ambassador also was a night owl. He used to go out in the evening and come back and tell me about his dealings with the 'pueblo,' as he called it, with the common people. As I remember, he told me he would put on a ruana, a sort of blanket-like garment that the Colombians wear, like a poncho, with a hole in the center. And it's perfect for the cold Andean climate. And he would go out to places and mix with the people, sort of in disguise. I mentioned that this was a very dangerous city, and he of course had bodyguards, but I learned later that he sometimes left them behind when he went out at night. And on one occasion when his wife was sick and at home, I tried to reach him on the radio. She was bleeding from an operation. And we couldn't get through to his follow-up car, which was supposed to maintain constant radio communication. I reprimanded our security officer for this, and found out only after the Ambassador left that he had ordered that the radio contact be broken off by his bodyguards, so that his movements could not be monitored at the Embassy. I later found that he went to places where an American ambassador had never been seen before, and where he shouldn't have been seen. And they were probably places that were under police surveillance. And it is possible that information and intelligence about his nighttime activities were brought to the attention of the President.

Q: Are we talking about bordello type things?

DREXLER: Well, I can't go into details, really. Certainly the Ambassador didn't break any law, and he may even have run into other high-level government officials at some of the places he frequented. But the point was that he further diminished his stature in the eyes of the Colombian government, just by acting imprudently.

Library of Congress

Now, at this time, the major foreign policy interest of the Carter Administration in Latin America was not drugs, but the Panama Canal reversion. We were acting rather paradoxically, since we had taken Panama away from Colombia to build the Canal, and we now turned to the Colombians to persuade the Panamanians, whom they looked at as their little brothers, to be reasonable and accept reversion of the Canal under President Carter's terms. And President Lopez was in fact helpful in this regard. The Canal was important to Colombia, because it links their ports in the Caribbean, in Cartagena, with a port in the Pacific, and they told me privately that they would have loved to have us keep the Canal, because they weren't sure the Panamanians could manage it, but that of course they had to support Latin American solidarity. And Lopez was helpful. But Washington never told us how the negotiations were going on. We knew that they communicated directly and privately with Lopez. For me that meant I had to be careful. We could not rile the President or pressure him on narcotics, and risk jeopardizing the Panama Canal treaty negotiation. So that was the situation.

Q: Excuse me, Sanchez was there when Carter came in?

DREXLER: Yes. He stayed on after Carter was elected, because he thought that even though he was a Republican, that Carter would keep him on because he was a Latin. He finally had to be ordered out of Bogota, in a peremptory cable from the State Department that told him to leave within 10 days. During the negotiations, Ambassadors Linowitz and Bunker came to Bogota to consult with the President on the negotiations. They were to be there for one night and I assumed that Ambassador Sanchez would entertain them, but he told me that he had tickets for a skating show, something like the Ice Capades, and he was going off to see it, and wanted me instead give the dinner for Bunker and Linowitz, which of course I did. Bunker and Linowitz were of course great gentlemen statesmen, and didn't seem to mind so much, and we had a very interesting dinner. They went off then for their meeting with the President. Shortly before it, about the time they arrived, a cable came from Washington with instructions for Ambassador Sanchez.

Library of Congress

The Ambassador was, of course, invited to the luncheon that the President of Colombia gave for Linowitz and Bunker, and he accepted. But he was told by Washington that about 15 minutes before the apparent end of the luncheon he was to excuse himself and leave the premises, so that Linowitz and Bunker could speak privately, with Lopez. I was astonished by such an instruction. And Sanchez, even with his lack of familiarity with diplomatic and State Department procedure, even he thought it was humiliating. It was done that way as instructed. And then a few weeks later, or perhaps it was a month or so, the Ambassador was ordered to leave. A day or so after he left, a message came in marked from the Secretary for me, which said that I should know that during this fifteen minutes, Ambassadors Linowitz and Bunker conveyed the Secretary's personal apologies to President Lopez, for the embassy's mistake and overzealousness in pressing the Colombian president to take more action to free an American Peace Corps volunteer who was being held by guerrillas.

And the President of Colombia accepted these apologies. And so you see, from Lopez's point of view, he saw that for the sake of the Panama Canal negotiations, the Administration was willing to disavow its ambassador and the embassy, even though I think our position was a sound one and the representations we made on the kidnaping case were on instruction. So I think Lopez felt that 'I can handle the Americans this way on the strength of their needing me for the treaty negotiations; they're not going to be so much trouble on narcotics either.' And indeed, he continued to brush us off. There was a constant stream of visitors to Colombia: Senators, Congressmen, bureaucrats, and so on. He handled them all very deftly. His command of English was flawless, he had gone to St. Alban's School in Washington, of course. He was very debonair, sure of himself, and of course firm in this idea that it's your problem, you should solve it from the demand side. So he was able to sort of sail through. Meanwhile, while we could not get our act together, the Medell#n Cartel did get its own act together. The Cartel began acquiring sophisticated equipment, planes, telecommunications, money, organization, and made better use of Colombian officials for their purposes than we could for ours. And so that as we got into

Library of Congress

1977, they were well advanced in the cartelization of the supply side, and we were way behind in even recognizing, to say nothing of meeting the problem. Then, of course, the Carter Administration came in, and Sanchez was ordered out. It was clear by that time, even in the ARA Bureau, that Sanchez had been a disaster. And I learned from Frank Devine, the office director, that they advised the new administration, to by all means send in a career diplomat, someone who knew Spanish, and someone who could deal with the President, not another Sanchez. Instead, they nominated I think his name was Pedro Cabranes, a Puerto Rican American, a former member of new Secretary of State Vance's law firm, and a golfing partner of his, which was just the worst sort of move. This was to Lopez another slap in the face, even though Mr. Cabranes was a Yale graduate and was I think Counsel of Yale University. He was no Sanchez at all, in intellect, or personality, or professional abilities. But he looked the same. Mr. Cabranes's first move was to curtail my assignment, even before we had asked for agreement for him from the Colombian Government, and to designate a young man he knew who was then at our embassy in Amman, Jordan, as the new DCM. This came as a considerable blow to me, because of the burdens I had least fancied I'd been bearing under Mr. Sanchez and the stress of the Bogota assignment, but what could you do? Then came the time to seek the agreement, and we held it off until the new Assistant Secretary of State, Terry Todman, was paying a flying visit to the region — one night in Bogota, and we decided that he would present the note, asking agreement. He saw the President in the morning, and Lopez didn't say very much. Todman later said to me, "Well, it looks pretty good," although I think Mr. Todman should have realized since there was ample information that this was probably not going to be a good move, but we went ahead with it. That afternoon we saw the Foreign Minister, and he said that they were thinking of denying the agreement, causing a major political crisis. Todman was absolutely shocked, and flash cables went back in the agreement channel, that for the first time in the history of bilateral relations, the Colombians would refuse an Ambassadorial nominee, and of all things, from the new Carter Administration, which was pro-Latin American in its orientation, and its sympathies. Carter spoke Spanish, after all, right?

Library of Congress

So we were in a fix, and I didn't know exactly what my status was going to be. My replacement had meanwhile departed his post in Amman, and Mr. Cabranes's wife's parents arrived in Bogota, and asked to be shown the embassy residence, which we did, but not telling them, of course, what was amiss. The Carter Administration was shocked, and meanwhile had planned a tour of Latin America by Mrs. Carter, and she was coming to Bogota. It delighted us and displeased Lopez, who felt that sending a woman was inappropriate — President Carter should have come himself. So President Lopez was again offended and thought that Mrs. Carter was going to be a frivolous person. We had great difficulty with the Presidential Palace in working out the arrangements, which they sort of wanted to be Ladies' Night, Ladies' Day, Ladies' Luncheon, Ladies' Teas, and so on. And the Palace only grudgingly agreed to a short meeting with the President. So we had the ambassadorial problem and Mrs. Carter's arrival, and the President's state of mind, and the drug problem. So the fat was in the fire. Great pressure was put on the Colombian government to accept Mr. Cabranes, and one of the leaders behind this was one of Cabranes's fellow Puerto Ricans, the Mayor of Miami, Morris Ferre, who on his own, tried through his own business connections to put pressure on the Colombians. And I was on one occasion summoned urgently to the Foreign Ministry and the Foreign Minister complained to me that Mr. Ferre had said that if they didn't accept Cabranes, Mrs. Carter would not come. And the Foreign Minister said that he thought that this was intolerable. And I said that I couldn't believe that Mr. Ferre was speaking for the government, nor that there would be any such linkage, and I would report this immediately, which I did. And I got a message back from the Secretary, saying "Tell the Foreign Minister that Mr. Ferre is acting on his own. The Secretary confirmed that Mrs. Carter will come in any case." And so she did. The Cabranes imbroglio was a serious and sensitive political problem for the Administration. On one occasion I was talking to our desk officer on the phone — this was the one officer in the Department who spent his whole day working on Colombia, rather than part Venezuela, a capable and serious young man. He told me that he was going to go off to see the Colombian ambassador on some matter, and it was clear to me from what he said that he didn't realize that Cabranes might not get the agreement,

Library of Congress

and so I felt he would either make a fool of himself personally, or make the Colombian Ambassador think that we were in total confusion. So, trying to double talk, I signaled to him that there was a problem. But he had not been told about this before. And he then went to see his superiors, including Deputy Assistant Secretary Bill Luers, who got me on the phone and reprimanded me for having told the desk officer about this. Thereafter, as my punishment, the Department kept me totally in the dark about the efforts to get the Colombians to accept Cabranes. I learned at a luncheon with some Colombians, for example, that they were planning to send Ambassador Vaky from Caracas, to see his old friend President Lopez, to try and make him change his mind. The Department did not tell me anything about this. I reported it matter of factly, and I didn't complain. Several months dragged by. We're talking now about the middle of 1977. And meanwhile Mrs. Carter came, but just to continue the Cabranes thing, one day the Foreign Minister called me on the phone, and told me with delight that Cabranes was not coming. Washington had not bothered to tell me this, and in fact never did. And it turned out that the Colombians had grudgingly granted agreement, but by then Cabranes felt that he was not welcome, and he didn't want to go. So he didn't come to Bogota, and the poor fellow he selected as DCM, I don't know whatever happened to his effects on board ship from Jordan to Cartagena, but I stayed on as DCM. And the White House was miffed, and took its time to name a replacement to Cabranes. The Colombians made it known that they would really like a career man, and preferably not a Hispanic, and the Department was not about to cave in. As a result, I found myself as Chargé d'affaires for about 10 months of 1977, which was again, a formative period for the drug cartels.

Mrs. Carter came, and the visit was quite successful. I found her totally charming and a very intelligent person, with most winning ways. To spend five minutes with her was as if I had known her for 20 years. Undemanding, but very professional, serious minded, articulate. She turned her brief visit with the President to the greatest possible advantage. I think she charmed him, and I think he realized he had made a mistake in not taking her seriously. So that visit was a plus when she came she stayed at the Ambassadorial

Library of Congress

residence, which was vacant of course, and was to be for some time. I met privately with her before we were to go see the President, and she told me that she had orders, instructions from her husband, President Carter, to take a very hard line with Colombia. I should explain that in our efforts to get some equipment for the Colombians and activate their drug interdiction programs, we'd gotten \$3 million to buy them three helicopters and some related equipment. And it took a long, long time to get it delivered. And of course Lopez would always throw this delay in our faces, saying, "You say you want us to help, but you're not giving us the equipment. You're not fulfilling your promises. Where are the helicopters?" So I thought, well, Mrs. Carter was coming and we could formalize the helicopter arrangements, but she had orders from President Carter to tell Lopez that there would be no helicopters. She was to say also that there would be no further assistance of any kind unless Lopez dealt with the official corruption that the embassy had reported was spreading throughout his government. I was horrified, and I argued with her. I said, "There is corruption, it is growing, but it's going to be a long-term problem. We simply must have the helicopters because he will regard it as a broken promise. Any chance of getting the President's cooperation will be jeopardized if you take this line, and moreover, at the working level, the ordinary Colombians, that is, the Colonels and the police and so on, have been counting on this equipment, and they really need it. If we deny it, they will be demoralized and will not believe any further pledges that we make to them." So I pleaded with her to not follow her husband's instructions. And to my surprise, she agreed, and told me that she would not, after all, take this line. And she didn't. She met with the President, she touched on the subject of corruption lightly, and went on with confirming that the helicopters would come, as they did. I was of course pleased, though it was a close-run thing. Later I regretted this, and I think I made a mistake, that they were right all along in Washington, that they should have drawn the line then, that it would have been better to have a confrontation with Lopez at that point, because when the helicopters were delivered — and I received them, I stood there getting sprinkled with holy water at a military airfield when they were turned over — I was immediately invited on a joy ride with the Colombian Military high command, who it was clear to me

Library of Congress

thought that they were getting some wonderful new toys, and that they were likely going to divert these helicopters to their own pursuits, rather than have them used for drug interdiction. And I had a constant battle with the Colombians over the helicopter support facilities. They wanted us to provide not only the helicopters but all the support costs as well. And Ambassador Sheldon Vance would get on the phone and reprimand me for even considering this. He said this was unthinkable. And I said, "Well, Ambassador, you just don't understand it. The Colombians will just let those helicopters rust away, unless we provide what they want. We are at their mercy." And he grumbled, but we did this. We provided the additional support but it became clear to me that the helicopters weren't going to be effectively used.

Then, the CIA Station Chief came to me with a plan for CIA involvement in anti-narcotics work. And it involved an intelligence operation. There's no point in my giving the details about it, but he asked me to approve it, and said it had been approved by the 40 Committee, which was the sub-Cabinet level group that passed on clandestine operations abroad that were sensitive. And this was not to be made known to the DEA. So I approved it, and we started it. It was, in essence, a fine operation in which we used a very small number of trusted Colombian law enforcement officials, who we could monitor closely so as to ensure that they weren't being turned against us or corrupted, or that we would see it when they were; and in which we collected intelligence on the contacts between the drug traffickers and high-level Colombian officials. The idea was to pass this on in Washington. The program worked very well. The intelligence it gathered was horrifying, because it detailed the rapid spread of corruption. And of course, this depressed me all the more. Meanwhile, I got constant visitors, including members of the Congressional Special Committee on Narcotics, Congressman Gilman and Congressman Lester Wolf, who subjected me to almost a congressional type of investigation and interrogation in our conference room, putting a microphone before me, recording my remarks, and throwing questions at me which were designed to show that I and my staff were not doing enough to curb the flow of narcotics to the United States. And their final conclusion was that it was

Library of Congress

bad that the embassy was left in the hands of a Chargé d'Affaires. We should have an ambassador. Of course, I would agree with that, but we know why we didn't have one. The Congressmen came down frequently, and were a heavy burden, particularly for my wife, since their wives were inveterate shoppers. My wife and the other wives were almost exhausted by their demands. I had no doubt that Congressman Gilman was sincerely interested in narcotics. He was sympathetic and seemed to understand my problems and the difficulties we faced. Mr. Wolf, I always thought was grandstanding it, and was insensitive and demanding, and mostly liked to hear himself talk into the record.

Nonetheless, they went to see the President, and he brushed them off again, and so we drifted along. To make a long story short, finally a new ambassador was nominated. It was Diego Asencio, the DCM in Caracas. The State Department had agreed, in other words, to the Colombian demand that it be a career diplomat, but they would not accept that he should be non-Hispanic. But Diego, of course, met the bill, because he was Hispanic from Spain, he was not Mexican or Puerto Rican. So he came to Colombia. Of course he was a very capable professional, very bright, hard driving, and he sort of reestablished the relationship we had had with Lopez under Vaky. But by then it was too late. The corruption of the officials, the organization of the cartels had gone so far, that it could no longer be reversed. And as I say in the book I've written on this subject, I think that it was in late 1976 and 1977 that the balance of forces theoretically was still in favor of the law enforcement side. That is to say, if the United States and the Colombians could have effectively allied their law enforcement and judicial forces against the cartel at that time, we could probably have swamped them, or at least forced them to go someplace else; disrupted them at a time when they were very weak and disorganized, and still eliminating their own rivals. But by the end of 1977, the balance of forces, I think, was in their favor, and it couldn't be reversed. And it still hasn't been. Ambassador Asencio arrived with his own plan to fight the narcotics problem. He said to me, "I may not be able to stop the flow, but they won't be able to accuse me of not having tried." And he was right in both cases. He unveiled to me an ambitious plan involving more US government entities, Coast

Library of Congress

Guard, Customs, and so on. The plan also involved the Colombian military, which I was opposed to, because I feared that they would be corrupted next. Asencio also thought he could work effectively with the new Colombian president, Turbay, about whom I had doubts. Ambassador Asencio, who was and still is a friend of mine, had no previous experience in Colombia, and didn't know what we had been up to. He didn't know, for example, that I had met privately with the Colombian President and Peter Benzinger, the DEA Administrator, who had come down secretly, and that we arranged a completely off the record, two-on-one meeting with the President, in which we turned over to him a list of officials of his government we believed had been corrupted. I didn't know if he would throw us out of his office or what he would do. But he looked at the list and said very gravely that this confirmed his worst suspicions, but he took no action. He never even asked me for further information on the officials, and none of these people, to my knowledge, were ever removed from office.

So I thought that Ambassador Asencio's plan was completely unrealistic. I prepared a dissent channel cable to this effect and took it into him. I said that I thought that this would not work, that the drug war couldn't be won in Colombia, that the decisive battles had to be fought in the States. We should have some programs going on in Colombia, like the small intelligence operation I just described to you and had started, but we should collect intelligence for the purpose of interdiction of these people in the United States, interdiction of their persons, and their funds, and so on, and just keep a small program going in Colombia. Asencio told me in the friendliest possible way that such a dissent telegram would ruin my career. Not that I would be fired, but I could say good-bye to any important assignment, because he said that in Washington the sentiment was so strong now, and so revved up behind anti-narcotics, that anyone who didn't share this view, and didn't have a can-do attitude, but had a defeatist attitude like mine, would be brushed aside and would be discredited. I should remind you that by that time, I had already lost the assignment to Peking as DCM because of my disagreement with the Carter Administration's policy on China. And so, of course, this was a sobering thought, that I would suffer further in this

Library of Congress

connection. I was coming to the end of my assignment in Colombia, and of course, never expected to be involved in narcotics again, but I agonized over this, and finally we thought of a way out. Asencio said, "We're going to have a team of inspectors coming, it's going to be a new policy inspection, not nuts and bolts. Rewrite your dissent telegram Bob, make it a memo, and give it to them," which I did. They were not much interested. They took the memo, and I never heard anything about it since.

I left Colombia, and I was glad to put it all behind me. I left in the summer of 1978. But then, years later, when I started writing the book, *Colombia and the United States: Narcotics Trafficking and the Failure of Policy*, I wrote to the Inspector General after I retired, and said that I would like to find out what happened to the memo, what the inspection report was, because I had left before it was published. The Inspector General, Mr. Funk, wrote back and said that there was no mention of meeting with me on narcotics in the inspection report, nor any notation that my memo, with the dissent, had been handed to them, or that anything had been done with it. A copy of it could not be found, the inspectors themselves had retired, and could not be contacted. But the Inspector General assured me that nothing like this could ever happen again. Then I learned that this Inspector General himself was doing an assessment of our worldwide narcotics program, and having his own doubts about what we were doing in Colombia. So I sent him the chapter of my book, which covers what I've just been talking about, in even greater detail, thinking he might find it useful. He did not thank me for it, nor even acknowledge its receipt. So it was rather hard for me to remain convinced that the disregard of my first memo was not something which could happen again, because as far as I know, the second record that I gave him was also ignored.

There is one other thing I should mention, because it had some political significance going beyond Colombia and drugs. After Ambassador Sanchez left, a few days later, a Lieutenant Colonel, who was the Executive Officer of our Military Group, came to see me, and said that he had been contacted by a young Colombian who had worked at the Residence. This Colombian had previously worked for one of the many American officers

Library of Congress

in the Milgroup, and when the officer had been reassigned, he was out of a job, and they arranged for him to get employment at the Residence, with Ambassador Sanchez. As soon as Ambassador Sanchez left, the boy came to the Colonel and said that he wanted out. And he made certain accusations against the Ambassador. These were of such a nature that I had to call in the Regional Security Officer and the Security Office in Washington sent down a team of investigators, who conducted an investigation lasting many weeks, of many people in Bogota, including the entire Embassy Residence staff. As a result of this investigation, I fired the complete staff of the Residence, and sent back the butler, who I had kept on hold all that year, and told him to reorganize things and get everything ready for the new ambassador, which he did. The report of the investigation, a very lengthy one which I saw, was shocking. And I asked that the Department bring it to the attention of Mr. Sanchez, who of course was then out of office. The Department declined to do this, saying that he was then a private citizen, and they could see no justification for it. I returned to Washington, and in 1980-81, I became the Director of the Office of Recruitment, Employment, and head of the Board of Examiners. And one day, an examiner came to me and with astonishment said that one of the applicants under the Junior Officer Affirmative Action Program turned out to be a former ambassador. And it was Mr. Sanchez. He had taken advantage of the affirmative action program as a minority member, and had taken the oral exam, which he passed, of course. And in the oral exam, the examiners do not know the background of any of the candidates. And it was only after he passed, and he was asked to submit documents, that they found on his curriculum vitae that he had been an ambassador. I asked who it was, and it was Sanchez. So I had to recuse myself from the handling of his case, and turned it over to the deputy office director. We brought this matter to the attention of SY, which contacted Mr. Sanchez on several occasions. He was then at his hometown in Fresno. Security said that they would like to send an agent out to talk to him about this, which I thought was only fair to him, to show him the reports of the investigation. He put them off, and put them off, until one day, many months later, he said he himself was coming to Washington, and would see them then. Shortly thereafter, I received a call from Diego Asencio, who by that time was

Library of Congress

Assistant Secretary for the Consular Bureau, who told me that Ambassador Sanchez had been nominated by the Reagan Administration, to the Cabinet. He was either going to be Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare, or Housing and Urban Development. I think it was the former, but I don't remember. This horrified me, because I was sure that Mr. Sanchez was not qualified for a Cabinet level appointment, and it seemed to me that the Reagan Administration was not aware of his background. At that time my job also involved hiring all the people for the State Department's civil service and recruiting Secretary of State Haig's entourage. And I knew and was familiar with, and was under pressure myself to bring all these people on board before their background investigations were complete, for obvious reasons. The new Administration was impatient, and if you delayed or took too much time you were suspected of not knowing who won the election. So I thought this had probably happened in the case of Mr. Sanchez, that his record had not been carefully reviewed but that his background would come out, and be an embarrassment to the President. I also had my personal feelings. So I contacted a friend of mine who was a high official in the Central Intelligence Agency, who got through to Mr. Casey, who by then was Director-designate of the CIA, and of course one of the top men in the Reagan campaign. Shortly thereafter, the wire services carried the report that Mr. Sanchez had withdrawn his name from consideration, saying that because of family reasons, he didn't want to come to Washington. So that was the sequel to the Sanchez affair.

He had earlier tried to come back to Colombia, when I was still the Charge of the Embassy and I had a terrible argument with him on the phone, when I thought he was being manipulated by shady elements in Las Vegas, Nevada, although I don't think he knew who they were, and we couldn't be sure. He wanted to come back to Colombia to help an American who had nearly died in a plane crash, and had suffered terribly from burns. He called me from Las Vegas, from the offices of an air ambulance service, that was going to fly in and take this man back to the states. Such burn victims from small aircraft were almost invariably drug traffickers whose planes crashed in the mountains of Colombia. It was unthinkable that we should spirit such a person out of Colombia from a hospital. And

Library of Congress

unthinkable that a former American ambassador would come down and do this. And the ambassador assured me that he would come as a private person, and demanded that I issue a passport to him at the Bogota airport and facilitate this. And I flatly refused to do this, and said that we would not meet him or greet him, I would not issue him a passport, nor provide any assistance, and that I objected to his coming, that he should know that his performance in Bogota had been a subject of an investigation, and that the consequences of it had caused serious problems in our bilateral relations, even leading to the difficulty in the naming of his successor, and that he should not come back to Colombia under any circumstances, and that it was fatuous to think that he could come back and pose as a private person. Unknown to me, the president of the air ambulance company was also listening in on the phone, and was rather surprised by this conversation. The ambassador was also surprised, and said that he would formally complain about my conduct to the State Department, which I invited him to do, and which he did, but of course nothing came of it. Much of this could have been avoided if he had been informed promptly, as I had wanted, of the investigation, but he was not, and so we had those sequels. So I left Colombia.

Q: I'd like to go back to one thing, and that is, you mentioned a Peace Corps kidnapping. This is that we didn't want to get too aggressive because of the Panama Canal. I'm an old Consular hand, and my antenna go up, because there is always something why the embassy shouldn't do something about an American citizen in trouble, because there's a treaty, there's a negotiation, or something. Could you talk about this?

DREXLER: Yes. The Peace Corps volunteer was kidnapped by the FARC, Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, one of the most formidable communist guerrilla organizations. He was kidnapped from a site in a remote area of Colombia. Naturally, most Peace Corps people are in remote areas. He was held for ransom. We were prevented from negotiating with the terrorists, of course, but they had him send a message to me through intermediaries, which I then sent on to Washington, and to his mother, who arrived on the scene, and of course pressed us to take all means to get her son out. She, like the families

Library of Congress

of other kidnapping victims, wanted us to negotiate with the FARC, which of course we could not do. I could not have anything to do with them, and this presented a certain problem, because we knew that he was not in perfect health, and that he needed vitamin supplements. But I could not send money to where he was being held, because this involved illegal forbidden contact with a terrorist group, nor could I spend embassy money to buy the vitamins for him. But on the other hand I couldn't let him die. So I informally arranged to buy his vitamins with our petty cash, and without any record and this helped him survive.

We were also dealing with the Colombian armed forces on this, and with the Colombian government. We wanted to be sure that they acted with care, because the Colombian police and army were famous for these scenes reminiscent of the movies, "Come out, we've got you surrounded," and they would have them surrounded, and they would find the dead bodies of the kidnap victims so often, that the relatives usually did not report kidnappings. So we had to be very careful that the Colombians handled this delicately, and didn't go too far. But we also felt that it was their responsibility to deal with the problem. They were responsible for the protection of American citizens, and it was up to them to take such steps to ultimately win his freedom, alive. It was this type of pressure that Lopez objected to and he felt that there wasn't anything that they could do, and that it was outrageous for us to insist that it was their responsibility to do something about the boy. And this is what produced the incident over which Linowitz and Bunker apologized.

Q: How did it come out?

DREXLER: Well, the boy was still held in captivity by the time I left, but finally through Jack Anderson, the mother got together, I believe, \$250,000.00 and the ransom was paid. The Colombian government was also opposed to paying ransom, but they turned a blind eye, and they allowed immediate relatives of the kidnap victim to deal directly with kidnappers. The mother, Mrs. Jenson, of course wanted to do anything to deal with the kidnappers, but she didn't speak Spanish. And so I had to try to get President Lopez's permission to

Library of Congress

allow her to deal with some Colombian as an intermediary, so that she could communicate with the people holding her son. We put this on the agenda when Lopez went to the White House for the signing of the Panama Canal Treaty. I escorted him to the White House for the meeting with Carter in the Cabinet Room. But President Carter forgot to raise the issue, and it was only when we were driving away from the White House that I said to the President, "You know, we have this kidnap victim, and I understand Mr. President, that you would be prepared to overlook immediate relatives dealing with the kidnappers. The thing is, the only relative in this case does not speak Spanish, and I would really like to know if you would object, or if there would be unfortunate consequences if Mrs. Jenson was in fact put in touch with intermediaries, because I didn't want this again to blow up in my face." And he turned to me and said — he was annoyed, obviously — but he said, "Well, what you are doing Mr. Drexler, is like finding yourself in the No Smoking car of the railroad train, and being obliged or compelled to light up, and you are trying now to ask the conductor whether it's okay to light up." So I said, "Very good, Mr. President, I think I understand you," and we dropped the matter. I reported this conversation then to my superiors, and said I took it to mean that the President did not wish to know about this; he did not wish to be asked, but it was most likely that he would not look into it any further, and that if he found out about it, he would not make any trouble. And that's what she did. She went ahead, and she finally got her son out.

Q: I think we'll have another session on this, but one question I would like to ask about the Board of Examiners, and that is, I can see that in a way, there really should be no particular difficulty, once one's mind is made up, to get an adequate number of women who want to join the Foreign Service. Certainly since the 1920s they have been getting basically the same education as men, it's motivation and it's opportunity. What about particularly with the minorities? And when we're talking about minorities, we're talking about Hispanics, but especially Blacks. There it seems you are up against a couple of things, at that time and probably even today: One, it was not a group that had gotten the best education, the culture seems not to be pointed toward the Foreign Service; we didn't

Library of Congress

pay well, so those who were bright and who were Black could go to a corporation and earn twice as much money, almost initially. I dislike using the term, but often a token, because there were so many laws and these people were sought after. I thought we would be rather low on the totem poles as far as recruiting.

DREXLER: I once, though, had on board and used as a recruiter, a young Foreign Service officer who had played with the Harlem Globetrotters, and also had a Bachelor's degree from Harvard College, and he was Black. He was quite a role model, and we sent him out. But he left the Foreign Service, and I suspect he was hired by a major corporation. Many of those people with whom there was competition were lost to us, but often it was because of the time it took to do the security background investigation.

Q: This is also true of some of our best and brightest who were not minorities. Were you able to do anything about that?

DREXLER: Well, I had regular meetings with the SY staff, and we tried to streamline the procedure; to shorten the forms, to shorten the time for doing investigations for the security clearances. But it was very hard because it's a very labor intensive job, and the men who were going out doing it didn't like doing it. Most of them wanted instead to be in a protective detail or to do something that wasn't so boring or tedious, since usually they didn't turn up anything that made their work at all interesting; nothing derogatory, of course. And in this period, we were bringing in the Reagan Administration, so there was a great deal of pressure on my office and on SY to give top priority to clearing and hiring those members of Haig's entourage. And it was a large one, I'll tell you. And there were all these other people who were getting political appointments, heading the bureaus, and so on. In the Reagan Administration, as you may recall, political appointees got rather lower down in rank in the hierarchy than we were accustomed to, so there were many more people to clear, and SY just had to give them priority. And of course there was an additional problem, because a person ideally suited for the Foreign Service was one who had lived or served abroad, and when we selected such candidates that just made the

Library of Congress

security investigation all that more difficult, because it had to cover the time abroad as well. In the case of the Hispanics, very few Hispanics were brought on board, because of the language difficulty. I went myself on one occasion to Puerto Rico and gave the oral exam there, and the candidates were bright, well educated, well informed, broad in background, but they did not have the command of English that was required. There was nothing to do about that. So I targeted our recruitment efforts at the Hispanic families, rather than at the young people, so as to let the parents know, while they had children who were still in high school, or grade school, that the Foreign Service offered opportunities for them, and because the Hispanic family is felt to be rather tightly knit, or at least parent controlled or dominated, to get the young people while they were in grade school and high school, to start acquiring the skills which would take them to college, which would get them into the majors there which would also make them fit for a Foreign Service career. So we tried to get them to start very early, and I hope that over the long term this had produced more eligible people. With the Blacks, there was no language difficulty, and during the time I was there, we came up with some excellent candidates, and as I said, we met our goals with them. It was not easy, it took a lot of recruiting work, but it was done. And of course also, we had to accept the finding that part of the Foreign Service examination had been discriminatory, that some of the questions were not job related and tended to exclude or disadvantage Blacks who did not have a rich cultural background. So each year we agonizingly recast the Foreign Service written exam, going over every single question with people from Education Testing Service, with a panel from the Consular, Admin, Econ, and Political cones, so that we could justify that every single question was such that knowledge of its answer was important for success in that cone in the Foreign Service. So there were no more questions about Bismarck and the war against Denmark. That also overcame some of the difficulties.

Q: But it does strike me that somebody is going to be dealing with Europe, it would be handy to know that Prussia had at one point had picked on poor little Denmark. We're

Library of Congress

exaggerating, but if you start going for pertinent cultural things, you end up having somebody who frankly isn't very well read.

DREXLER: That's a major issue that we had to face, and it was a very difficult process. But we did the best we could with educational testers and people from the cones. And then, of course, the exam, when it was given, was subjected to careful scrutiny by the committee of overseers, outsiders who monitored the Board of Examiners, and who could tell from the scores if too many minorities or women failed this section, it was scrutinized carefully to be sure that every question was job related. I felt concerned later, not when I was first there, but during my last four months in the service, while I was awaiting retirement, when I went back to the Board of Examiners, and worked as an examiner myself. That was five years later. I thought that by then the easing of the written exam had gone too far, and that the ignorance of some of those who had passed it and were coming before us for the oral exam was appalling, and we should have been, at that time, requiring a more substantial background knowledge than was the case in the written exam, but I'm afraid that was a losing battle against the pressures from the minority groups.

Q: We'll pick this up the next time. So you left the Board of Examiners when?

DREXLER: I left in 1982.

Q: And where did you go?

DREXLER: The US Mission to the Organization...

Q: Today is the 25th of March, 1996. So, you went to the Organization of American States from the Board of Examiners.

DREXLER: Actually, better said, it was the US Mission to the OAS, which is rather odd, because it's the only embassy that is located within the State Department Building.

Library of Congress

Specifically, it was in the old part of the building, I guess we were up on the 5th floor, and it has all the outside trappings of an embassy, a seal, flags, and so on. We were not too far from the actual Organization of American States, which is down near the White House, and we were right next door to the State Department's Latin American Bureau, which provided us with all the administrative support. Our personnel officers, our General Services Officers, that sort of staff that you would find at an embassy was all there in the Bureau. Also, the Mission to the OAS, unlike our Mission to the UN, did not send out its own cable traffic. The US Representative when I was there was J. William Middendorf, and he was always unhappy that he couldn't put out cables that were signed Middendorf, they had to be signed Shultz, because we used the State Department's communications facilities.

When I went to the job, I had looked forward to it. As I said, Middendorf was the Ambassador, and we had a second Ambassador, Herb Thompson, who was a Foreign Service officer and Middendorf's deputy, and then a staff of about nine or ten people, who reported to me. I was called a Director of Mission Operations, a sort of chief of staff. The career staff handled OAS operations having to do with cultural affairs, economic affairs, political affairs, and very important, money for the OAS budget. Because the large American government contribution to the OAS, amounting to about 25%, was handled through our office, through a very able and experienced civil service employee, Owen Lee, who I think knew more about the OAS's finances, fortunately, than the OAS bureaucrats themselves did. We were under pressure from Congress to reduce our share of the budget, and we put pressure on the OAS to economize, and to cut down their very bloated organization.

Q: After your experience in Bogota, was there a problem going back to an ARA assignment? Apparently, as you say, you never quite belonged to the ARA club.

DREXLER: There was no problem that I could sense, as far as ARA was concerned, because the problem was not personal, but more broadly operational, in that the Bureau

Library of Congress

did not really very much welcome or pay attention to the OAS mission as a whole. We were all outsiders, poor relations in that sense. I should say that I took the job because of the difficulty of finding senior officer positions at that time. Because of a family health problem, I couldn't serve overseas then, and there was a surplus of officers looking for senior officer slots, so I was happy to get this one. Also, I had a kind of a good impression of the OAS as an organization, and I lost that right away. I like to make the analogy that ideally the Organization of American States should be like a dust buster, this little gadget that you keep with the batteries charged at home and you use it occasionally for touch-up operations, clean-up operations; in the case of the OAS for, say, peacekeeping operations, to hold a conference, for other ad hoc tasks, I think the OAS would be very good, and as a small unit, deserves to be sustained. But instead what you got was, to continue the analogy, an enormous vacuum cleaner with 18 attachments, very expensive spare parts, high maintenance costs, and so on. All this sort of clanking around. The OAS bureaucracy was over staffed, bloated, overpaid, unemployed, and often the place where diplomats, officials, generals, and so on, from Latin American countries were exiled, to keep them out of the politics of their country. And a lot of our ex-diplomats — I wouldn't say they were exiled, but it was customary for persons who retired from the ARA Bureau, it frequently happened that they went over and took jobs in the OAS bureaucracy. They were very attractive and high paid, and not taxable jobs. So the organization did not impress me, but still the job of being the Ambassador to the OAS could be an important one, I still think, because if you take the job seriously, you can really be an important advisor to the Secretary of State, because you couldn't suffer from the traditional clientitis, since your "clients" are all these member countries. You could, at least according to my theory, take a more objective view of our priorities in the region as a whole, of what they should be, so you could play an important role in policy making toward the region if you wanted to, and so could the Secretary General of the United Nations at any given time. At that time it was Alejandro Orfila, who was a rather prominent man-about-town, an Argentine diplomat, who I think wanted to run for President. He was very active in Washington society, as was his

Library of Congress

wife. So the potential was there in individual terms, even if not in organization terms, for making an impact.

Now, Mr. Middendorf had formally been Secretary of the Navy and Ambassador to the Netherlands, under the Nixon-Ford Administration. He was a very wealthy New Englander, and a very serious art collector, very knowledgeable on Netherlands painting, Rembrandt, and so on, active in the Republican Party's right wing. At the OAS, even though he didn't speak Spanish, and knew nothing about Latin America, he had a certain status, a prestige, in the eyes of the other ambassadors, because he was known to be socially prominent, politically prominent, and rich. This was a winning combination in the eyes of many people, particularly in the eyes of Latin American diplomats. But unfortunately, Mr. Middendorf was not much interested in the OAS, and I often thought that one of the two signs over our entrance could come down. In those days it was the style in the Department if you were an Ambassador or of Assistant Secretary rank, that your name was in large letters over the door. And so there was his, and then we had the plaque, the US Permanent Mission to the OAS; I always thought you could take the plaque down and just leave his name and you would get a more accurate picture of what we were doing. He had many interests. I think the primary one was fine art. He was knowledgeable, and as I said, wealthy collector of paintings. At any given time we would have hundreds of thousands of dollars worth of pictures in the office, on approval from this or that gallery, while he decided whether he would buy them. He had such a large collection that I suppose he was doing this for investment, because we often had to send these things out to warehouses, rather than to his dining room, say. He regarded this as sort of his personal preserve. I'm afraid that I don't have very much respect for him, though he was a very bright, intelligent person. I just have a memory of him just being interested mostly in promoting himself. He also had an added staff, of over-complement people that he had brought on to simply support him in his various outside interests. Because he had been Secretary of the Navy, he got the Pentagon to assign a Navy Lieutenant Commander as his aide. He knew Charlie Wick, at USIS, and had him assign him an officer as his speech writer. Then we had another over-

Library of Congress

complement officer, Alberto Piedra, a protégé of Senator Helms, in the office. And all of these people, and to some extent all the rest of the staff, gravitated around Middendorf. And it was my job to see to it that the business of government was done in such time as he allowed us. I should explain that the other Ambassador, Herb Thompson, was a first class professional Foreign Service officer, spent most of his time at the OAS, attending and representing the US at these endless meetings and conclaves and caucuses, and so on, and doing it very well. But he sort of stayed away from the office. I think he didn't mind being away from Middendorf. I think I could sum up the way we operated by describing the results of an inspection that we had when I was there. When the inspectors came, I was a little apprehensive, and I think Middendorf all the more so, because it was clear that the Mission was not functioning in an ideal way, but rather as an adjunct to his interests, and I wondered how much of this the inspection team would perceive, and how much they would be interested in changing. I think they saw the problems, but they certainly were not interested in making any recommendations. And I think they were rather in awe of Mr. Middendorf, and his political authority and power. And I remember the Ambassador heading the team saying to me, after sort of shaking his head about this, "Well Bob, can you assure me that despite all this the business of the Republic is being done?" And I said, "Yes sir, we are trying to do this," and I suppose it was being done. But there wasn't all that much business, because the OAS and also our mission was held in low esteem by the Bureau.

Q: Was that endemic, or was it because of Middendorf? Did you have the feeling this waxed and waned depending on the person?

DREXLER: I think it waxed and waned, very much dependent upon the incumbent. I think when John Jova was the representative...Middendorf's predecessor was a former Senator, whose name escapes me...

Q: McGee?

Library of Congress

DREXLER: Yes, that's right. Gale McGee. He used to drop back, and he was very popular at the OAS. He knew Latin America, he was interested, and he had a personal authority, that prevailed over an inclination by others to denigrate the organization. And of course, much also depended upon who was the Assistant Secretary for ARA. This was Tom Enders. Enders and Middendorf were really not compatible. I had great respect and admiration for Enders, and I liked him. I had heard that he was arrogant and overbearing, and so on, and perhaps he was, but certainly not with us on his staff. He had a daily staff meeting that I attended, and I admired him. But I could also see how he was not on the same wavelength as Middendorf, and vice versa. Also, Middendorf treated the ordinary person, his staff, in particular, very shabbily. He was demanding and inconsiderate and also treated persons who came to call on him from outside this way. They were made to wait a half hour, sometimes an hour, cooling their heels in the lobby, while he dithered away at one thing or another. On the other hand, he was constantly toadying to people in the White House and his other political friends in order to advance his standing. But Enders, of course, was someone he could not afford to disregard or treat badly, and Enders had a confidence and a social position that did not oblige him to toady to Middendorf, which would have been the way to win him over. Middendorf had an insatiable appetite for flattery.

So the situation was an uneasy one, and posed some problems for me, since I had to keep the operations going and work with both of them. So I went to see Tony Gillespie shortly after I got there. Tony was a kind of special executive assistant to Enders. He ran the front office, he was very close to Enders, very influential, very capable, hardworking, and so on, and was really the Bureau manager. So I went to him, and I said that I realized that Middendorf was not regarded as part of the Enders team and there was friction there, and that there were two ways of handling this. One was to keep Middendorf at a distance, not send us the cables, not include us, keep us as far away as possible so we didn't ruin things for Enders and his policy. I said that such an approach made it tough for me and the rest of us. The other way was to try to bring Middendorf in the tent and to win him over,

Library of Congress

win his confidence, maybe make use of his White House connections, involve him in what the Bureau is doing to be sure that he was on board. Well, Tony listened to this, and they went back to keeping Middendorf at arm's length. Now, this contributed to Enders being forced to resign. It was at this time that Jeane Kirkpatrick made her notorious trip through Central America, and raised alarms that it was falling into the hands of the communists, who were then going to march on Texas, and then Missouri, Chicago, and Milwaukee next—or some such nonsense. She disagreed with Enders's approach to the area, which was often characterized as a two-track approach, using some military pressure against the Sandinistas in Nicaragua, and also in Salvador. But favoring negotiations when possible. I think that Jeane Kirkpatrick was instrumental in forcing him out of that position, and although I haven't any definite information, I know that Middendorf welcomed this, and he was always trying to get in and stay in Jeane Kirkpatrick's good graces. So I would imagine that the Administration naturally looked to him when it wanted to make a big Latin American personnel change, and no doubt he went along with this. I think it was most unfortunate, and got us into lots of trouble. Jeane Kirkpatrick is someone for whom I have very little respect, and I remember when I went back to the East Asian Bureau, our daily prayer was that she would never become interested in Asia the way she had been in Latin America when she started making trips.

Q: She was Ambassador to the United Nations.

DREXLER: Yes, and thus started making difficulties in another sector. Now, another Middendorf claim to authority was his supposed relationship with Jesse Helms. He was thought to be the only man in the State Department building who could get Jesse Helms on the phone. I never heard or saw him do this...

Q: You might explain who Jesse Helms is.

DREXLER: Jesse Helms is a Senator from North Carolina, who is a critic of the Foreign Service. He is a member of the Foreign Relations Committee, and extremely conservative

Library of Congress

in his views, staunchly anti-communist, and highly suspicious of the career Foreign Service. Politically, he and Middendorf were on the same wavelength. But personally, I never had the impression that he had any particular respect for or personal ties with Middendorf. But a member of Helms's staff, Debbie DeMoss, undoubtedly did. DeMoss was one of Helms's specialists on Central America, and was very close to Middendorf, although I don't know the origin of their relationship. I was told she was almost like an adopted daughter to him, and she frequently visited our office. She was, if possible, even more extreme than Senator Helms in her views. I can remember her being a strong champion of Roberto D'Aubuisson, the Salvadoran leader who had much blood on his hands, and whom American Ambassador Bob White labeled a butcher and a killer, the very worst type of right-wing villain, whom she championed, as did the Senator. The Senator also foisted on us a staff member, Alberto Piedra, a former professor of economics at Catholic University, and a refugee from Castro's Cuba. He was a sort of special advisor on political affairs to Middendorf, but was really out of his depth, and didn't have much to do. But we had to keep him on, and I was told that I had to get him the title of Ambassador. This was possible, because there were a number of OAS bodies, like those at the UN, such as an economic and social council, where the American representative had the personal rank of Ambassador. So there was repeated pressure from Helms, through Enders's office, down to me, to arrange this for Piedra. And finally I went ahead with it, but without much enthusiasm. I didn't really try to torpedo the paperwork or sabotage it, but I just let things take its course. And fortunately I think, for the Republic, Dr. Piedra's background investigation encountered some problems because of income tax, or whatever. Nothing serious at all, certainly nothing illegal, but it took time. So that he never got this ambassadorial title while I was there, though he was later named Ambassador to Guatemala through the normal channels.

It was during this time that we invaded Grenada, and our mission had an unusual role in this connection. Grenada, the Bishop regime that we overthrew, had designated a lady named Dessima Williams, to be their ambassador to Washington. But we refused to give

Library of Congress

her the agreement, because she was under indictment, I think in a court in Chicago, for arms trafficking. She had tried, through some illegal ways, to get weapons for her country's radical government, and had been caught, or failed. Anyway, we couldn't countenance accrediting an ambassador who was under indictment for arms trafficking, so we wouldn't take her. So there was nobody representing Grenada. But she then was named Grenada's ambassador to the OAS, over which of course we had no say. And she sat next to us at the Council chamber, because the seating was according to the Spanish alphabet. She was a very vivacious person, very bright, and interested in cultivating her next door neighbor at the table there, Ambassador Middendorf, who was sort of captivated by her, as we all were. So there at the OAS we had the only link really, with the radical Grenada government, and there was no US mission in their capital at this time either. She tried, as relations worsened, to make use of our mission to try to negotiate bilateral problems, to try to ease tensions, and try to reduce pressures on her government. And at this time, we became, or the Reagan Administration professed to be, very concerned about two things: one, the safety of American students who were attending a medical school there, and also the military potential of a large airfield that was being built. This airfield was being built with Cuban assistance and it was the Cubans who were the only ones who shot at us when our invasion force landed. But the Reagan Administration, which of course had this ridiculously exaggerated idea of the communist threat in the Caribbean and Central America, believed that this airfield was going to be used by Soviet bombers who could carry nuclear weapons. So we could have a missile crisis again, with a threat to our soft underbelly which I think was a preposterous idea. But nevertheless, that was concern, and the airfield was being built, and it was a large one. The Grenadians said it was for tourism, which I guess is now what it's used for. Now, I had a background in arms control and also in Latin America, so I said to Ambassador Middendorf, knowing how he liked to shine and give his name to agreements and treaties, and trophies and awards and so on, here's an opportunity where we might be able to do something. We could try to negotiate an agreement with the Grenadian government that this airfield is only going to be used for civilian purposes. I'm familiar with this from my work at the military committee

Library of Congress

at the CSCE, Conference on Security Cooperation in Europe, where we negotiated so-called confidence-building measures. And this was a way in the European context where potential adversaries could monitor what the other side was doing as far as moving aircraft, or building bases, or moving troops, or holding maneuvers was concerned. You gave notice, you had inspectors. It did work in the European context, which was certainly harder to achieve than say, in the Caribbean. So I said we could have such an agreement, and it could be monitored. It wouldn't be hard at all. And at the first sign that it wasn't being respected, well that would be curtains for Grenada. I was really enthused about this, and there we had Dessima Williams, whom I'm sure would have been willing to talk about it. But Mr. Middendorf was not. Unknown to me, he was already participating in secret White House meetings, planning the invasion. And I learned later he was turned to for advice as to how the OAS would react to such an invasion, which was to me a preposterous idea, since he was completely uninformed about such matters. For example, he would go to the White House and come back and call me in and say, "Bob, at lunch today so and so urged and Ed Meese said 'Bill, get Nicaragua thrown out of the OAS.' Bob, can't we do that?" I said, "Mr. Ambassador, maybe that would be nice, but it can't be done. We don't have the votes to get Nicaragua expelled from the OAS, and if we introduce a resolution, it's going to be amended, we won't have control of it, and the best thing that you could hope for, and that's not very good, is one that criticizes the Nicaraguans, and also condemns the US for arming the Contras to overthrow them. Just tell the people in the White House that this can't be done." Well, here was the man advising the White House on the Grenada operation. And so, of course, it was pulled off, and we invaded. As I mentioned earlier, one of the other motives was to save the medical students from being turned into hostages, a la Tehran, when our people were held there by the Ayatollah.

Q: You might explain just a little bit about the situation on the ground in Grenada at this particular time.

DREXLER: It was governed by a radical regime, that was probably pro-communist, although one which had wanted to be friendly to the United States. And it was highly

Library of Congress

personalized under the leadership of Bishop. Because of the war going on in Nicaragua, and the insurgency in El Salvador, it was thought of by the White House as a staging base, and one more front in this struggle. The Reagan Administration was determined to overthrow the Bishop government, and to put in another one that was more reliable. But it could not do this directly, it needed to justify it in terms of American public opinion, and in terms of regional, Latin American opinion. So there was in the first instance, the “danger” of the airstrip, as I mentioned. That was sort of for world opinion. For American opinion, there was the reported need of protecting American students at the medical school. And then there was the need for a fig leaf, someone to invite the United States in, and we found this in an obscure organization of Caribbean island states, former British colonies, who were undoubtedly worried about the Bishop regime, and the revolution that was going on in Grenada, and who were persuaded to request intervention, and to give the American force a multinational, or regional complexion. One of the island leaders, a lady whose name I forget, who was from Dominica, was very prominent in this role, and I remember her because she used our offices and my own secretary to type up the pronouncements that she was obliged to come up with to provide the fig leaf for our operation. As you can tell from what I was saying, I discount the airstrip and the request from the regional organization in Dominica. And as far as the students are concerned, we had no reports that they were in any danger. And after the invasion was pulled off, I happened to meet...

Q: We're talking about the invasion when?

DREXLER: Let's see, this would be about 1983, because Enders had already left. I later happened to be at the FBI Academy, and got to know a high ranking Army officer, who had an important role in Delta Force, this very secret Army Special Forces unit. He told me that prior to the invasion, one of his jobs in the preparations for it was to monitor the students' whereabouts, mapping the precise location of the school, which was outside the capital, and so on. He told me that when the invasion actually took place, no one came to him for the information, nor showed any interest at that time in getting them out, and this was one of the purported reasons for going in. And news reports indeed indicated that our forces,

Library of Congress

after they had landed, had trouble finding out where the students were to be rescued. I think this just shows how artificial that objective was. But nonetheless, it was brought off. That, I think, covers my exposure to the OAS.

Q: You were there from when to when?

DREXLER: This was 1983-1984.

Q: We had a long-standing problem with the United Nations. Did we owe dues to the OAS, and was this a problem?

DREXLER: In furtherance of a congressional resolution, we withheld each year a certain proportion of our dues. It was a small, 2-3% that Owen Lee worked on. But to my knowledge, apart from that, amounts due were paid. We did not have a massive arrearage, as at the UN. And of course the total amount of money involved was much smaller than the UN budget. We're talking millions instead of billions. And I think also with regard to the UN arrearages, as far as I know, the people in the Bureau of International Organizations, and at the USUN, are appalled by the fix we've got ourselves in at the United Nations. But this was not the case with OAS, where there was a strong sentiment throughout our government that it was a wasteful, bloated organization and that we were paying far too much, and that the money was not serving a useful purpose. So we were not troubled by this policy of holding some money back. We thought that this was well advised and sharply focused. In other words it represented an Administration view as well as a Congressional one, unlike the case with the UN.

Q: So you left in 1984, and whither?

DREXLER: Then I went back to the Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs. As I mentioned earlier, I was hired by Paul Wolfowitz, who was the Assistant Secretary, in an interview, when I seemed to say a magic word when I was describing how I had lost my assignment to Peking as DCM, because I favored a hard line toward China. He favored a

Library of Congress

hard line toward China too, and I guess I was such a rare bird among China specialists, that this convinced him to take me on. And I was made Director of the Office of Regional Affairs. In that office we handled at that time the Asian refugee problem, which was a very serious one, all of the million or more refugees from Vietnam, the boat people suffering horribly in the camps throughout Southeast Asia, the refugees from Laos and Cambodia, and so on. I also was responsible for military assistance programs to all of East Asia, and for economic assistance programs. And I handled arms control, which was just beginning to — I mentioned that the arms control field, when I entered it in the '60s was European in its focus, and its experts and staffs were all European in their background studies — arms control was now beginning to shift in focus to Asia, and there were proposals for nuclear free zones and other measures. And also I watched China and other affairs, which had a regional interest.

I was the only office director that participated in Paul Wolfowitz's senior staff meetings, which was with Deputy Assistant Secretaries, and his press advisor. I had and have great respect for Wolfowitz, a brilliant, hardworking man, whom I'm sure has a long, great future ahead. We were not always in agreement on domestic politics, certainly, but I had great respect for him. He was a sort of one-man band. I was used to having papers pile up on Middendorf's desk, because he never paid attention and wasn't interested. The papers piled up on Paul Wolfowitz's desk because he was interested, and wanted to read all this, and he would lug home a briefcase that I would have found hard to carry. He was extremely conscientious and hardworking. I should say about politics that when I went to work for Middendorf I was an Independent. After two years with him I became a registered Democrat, and having seen his friends Pat Robertson, Ollie North, and James Watt, and that whole crew. But Paul and I took a conservative view about China, and I think he liked that. The EAP bureau was compartmentalized very much. The office of Indonesian Affairs focused on that country, and they did their own thing. The Philippine affairs officers did their thing, and the Japan people were doing their thing, and the China people had their shop. The problem was that while what happened in Indonesia

Library of Congress

and the Philippines, and the Australia/New Zealand desk, didn't much affect the rest of the region, but certainly what happened in China did. And I found that the other office directors, covering Indonesia, Thailand, the Philippines, Japan even, always had their eye on what the China specialists were doing, but they never butted in, and were rather inhibited and reticent, because they hadn't studied Chinese, so they didn't know the secret handshake and the secret password, and the China crew let them know this, and kept them out. This crew insisted that their work was only for specialists and those of us who understood China. But of course with my background I could not be kept out in that way, and I constantly sent in memos to Paul, criticizing this or that that I saw developing in our China policy. Primary among this was the growing military relationship between the United States and China, which horrified me. We began moves to update the electronics on their fighter planes, to improve the technology on their ships, to exchange visits with the Chinese military, and so on, all of which I thought was not in our interest, and was selling rope to the hangman. I sent memos to Paul criticizing this, and I remember on one occasion when we were at the FBI Academy together, and I drove him back, and I told him my views, why I thought we were ill-advised to develop military ties with China. He said, "Well, Bob, I think you're right and I agree with you, but unfortunately this thing has gone too far, and the White House and the Pentagon, and so on, and Shultz, and it just can't be stopped, and we just have to go along with it."

At this time, the Soviet Union was turning into a Pacific power. It didn't last long. They were building up their fleet, they were using Cam Ranh Bay, our former Vietnam facilities, and they were making agreements with a lot of these newly independent island states, buying their fish, or crabs, octopuses, or whatnot, in return for refueling rights and potential base facilities. So they were presenting a new threat in the Pacific to us. And this was the thing that drove the Pentagon to a closer military relationship with China. The Pentagon thought that we could complicate things for the Soviets in the Pacific by cooperating more with China, and some of the Pentagon people even envisioned China and the United States fighting together against the Russians. I actually saw a Pentagon paper that Paul sent me

Library of Congress

with such a scenario, and he asked me to comment on it, do what I could to fix it up, and so on. And I took it to him and said, "This can't be fixed up. The analysis, the concepts are so erroneous that nothing can be done with this." One of the specifics was that the Chinese would help take out Cam Ranh Bay, that in this war with the Soviet Union we could depend upon the Chinese navy and air force to attack Cam Ranh Bay and neutralize the Soviets there while we were fighting in other areas. I said that this was fantasy, not even science fiction. If the Chinese see a war shaping up between the Soviets and the United States, they'll order a cup of coffee and sit back and watch the tigers fight. There is even a nice Chinese saying to go with this. It's completely unrealistic to expect what the Navy was expecting, but nonetheless it went forward.

And one of the things that troubled me was that EUR and the Soviet specialists didn't seem interested in this. Typically a paper on the subject of Sino-American military cooperation would make clear that this particular move was going to present strategic problems for the Soviets in Asia, and complicate the decision making for Soviet military planners, and contain other advantages for us and disadvantages for Moscow. But, as I would say to Paul, there's always a missing paragraph, and that was, how were the Soviets going to react? What are they going to do when we do this with China against them? What are their countermeasures; what might they do? This was always missing. I would take these papers often to the Soviet desk, and find that they were not much interested in it. There was no input for them, no real desire to comment. They themselves just couldn't focus, apparently, on the Pacific. I don't know what other reason there might be. So I found this very troubling, so I formed a committee, an inter-bureau committee, called the Soviets in Asia Committee, which I chaired and which brought together once a month Soviet specialists, and our Asian specialists from the State Department. And we sat down and matched notes on what the Soviets were doing in Asia, what we were doing in Asia and the Pacific with the Chinese, and I tried to close that gap between the Bureaus. And then we would take minutes of our meetings, and reach some conclusions, and record observations, note this or that with alarm, and so on, and then these minutes

Library of Congress

would be circulated to Paul and to others, which I thought was a good idea, and might help put some brakes on what we were doing with the Chinese in an anti-Soviet thrust. I think that this committee was not continued after I left that job in 1987, and of course, although we couldn't see it at the time, the Soviet Union collapsed, the Soviet Pacific navy is now rusting in Vladivostok.

Q: I'm an old navy buff, and seeing these really beautiful ships all lined up and sort of listing off to one side on the mud flats...

DREXLER: We couldn't have foreseen that, but it came out all right, although the military aid and cooperation to China is still there and will haunt us.

Q: It already is.

DREXLER: Yes. Now, at that time there was a change in the Administration's policy toward the Soviet Union, at least nominally. Before the change, if I understood it correctly, it was the thought that we would have to regularize our bilateral relationship with the Soviets, sort of at the summit levels, and then once that was done, if it could be done, our problems in various parts of the world — Central America, Latin America, the Middle East, Africa, the Pacific — would sort of fall into place. They would be corollaries of this basic agreement. But then this idea was changed. I don't know whether it originated in the White House, or with Shultz, or both. It was decided instead to attack the regional problems. To overcome misunderstanding and conflicts in the various regions with the hope that this would build a basis for a better bilateral relationship and maybe for a far-reaching summit agreement. That was a good theory and in practice we had meetings with the Soviets. Their Latin American specialists and our Latin American specialists first got together and what was important for us was that it was then proposed that the State Department's Asian specialists get together with Moscow's Asian specialists. I thought this was a great idea. Paul Wolfowitz was not so anxious to do it. He is strongly anti-Soviet, anti-communist, highly suspicious of Moscow.

Library of Congress

Q: You were mentioning Paul Wolfowitz?

DREXLER: Yes, he had a very well reasoned idea of the Soviets as our antagonists and rivals, based on academic study, work in the arms control field, in other words, well founded, well reasoned, not visceral...

Q: What was his background?

DREXLER: He had a Ph.D., and I think he taught at university. I believe he did a Ph.D. thesis in arms control on the International Atomic Energy Agency's safeguards of nuclear installations. I think he had served perhaps in the Nixon-Ford Administration in the arms control field, but I can't say for sure. But his background is what we would call a political-military background, with specialization in Soviet Affairs. So he was a careful student and a real expert on the subject. He had never been to Moscow, and that's where we were supposed to go for our first experts meeting. Before we left for there, he arranged a sort of a bull session with a lot of other hard line American Soviet specialists, whom I briefed as to what we were going to do when we got to Moscow. Paul wanted his colleagues to know that we weren't going to sell out our country or be patsies or pushovers, or agree to give up our weapons, or let the Soviets seduce or entrap us. They could depend upon us, and they didn't seem to be worried, but I think that Paul felt he had to secure his right flank if he was going to go to Moscow. And so I drafted for him a memo to Shultz as to what we were going to achieve. We were going to sock it to them in Moscow, we were going to take a hard line, hit them on human rights, and go in there and fight. And I think the Secretary looked this over and sent it back with a marginal comment saying, "This is fine Paul. But also be alert to any signs of flexibility on the Soviets' part."

So we went off to Moscow in 1985. We had two days of talks with the Soviets. They didn't go very well. Ambassador Hartman was away, and the embassy officer in charge of our arrangements got everything balled up. We went to the wrong place for the meetings, we missed our plane, everything was fouled up. And the Soviets said that they didn't

Library of Congress

have such a thing as an Assistant Secretary, and so their top Asia man, who was called a Deputy Minister, named Kapitsa, a terrible man, would not deign to meet with Paul, because Paul was of lower rank. So Paul said "Well, if he's not going to meet with me, I'm not going to go. You go and meet with him Bob. You go to meet with his underling." I said, "We've come here to Moscow, we can't do this. We have to go through with the talks." And I'm sure if Hartman had been there he would have advised us to. But the Charge, a DCM, was in sort of awe of Assistant Secretary Wolfowitz, and he wasn't much help. But it got very tense there as we prepared for this session, so I said to Paul, "Well, why don't you have a private meeting with Mr. Kapitsa, before the conference, and tell him that things like this sort of protocol problem of rank shouldn't stand in the way of a good frank discussion." So he agreed to this, and when we finally got to the right place, he had a private session with Kapitsa, and sort of worked things out, so that we had our meetings, and the protocol problems were resolved. It turned out that the number two at the talks was Igor Rogochov, the man with whom I'd met 20 years before in New York, when he and I both had the task of making sure that the Chinese language version of the Nonproliferation Treaty conformed, in my case to the English, and in his, the Russian language version. So he remembered me from that time, and I remembered him. The meeting was useful, but Paul took a very tough line on human rights, and Kapitsa got angry, or he feigned anger, and said he wasn't going to be lectured on human rights. And Paul, who is Jewish, had a very strong empathy with the so-called Refuseniks, the Jewish community that was being held almost in bondage in Moscow, and not allowed to immigrate. He felt this very strongly and understandably. So there were emotional issues in the meetings, too. We did have a fairly frank exchange on a number of issues. One of the things that I was supposed to ask the Soviets, and did, was what was going to happen in North Korea after Kim Il Sung died. We hear that he's got this crazy son. Is he going to inherit the way the Bourbons and the Hapsburgs did? You know him better than we do; what is he like? It turns out that they didn't know him much better than we did, and they didn't have anything to offer, and it was clear that they were rather worried too as to what Kim Jong Pil was going to be. Well,

Library of Congress

we're still in that boat. So after the meeting, we flew all the way across I don't know how many time zones to Tokyo to begin briefing our Asian friends about the talks.

Q: Talking about the meeting, what was the impression you got of the Soviet feeling toward China at the time?

DREXLER: We had common views as far as analyzing what was going on, what the state of play was there with Deng Xiaoping. As I recall, we both had the feeling that these Chinese could really be a pain in the ass. That they really were quite a handful to deal with. I think we shared information and matched notes, almost the way I used to do when I would go to the NATO meeting of Asian experts in Brussels, which I did twice a year. It was rather the same atmosphere. Once we got off the human rights thing, there was more or less what was intended, an exchange of views among specialists. There was no posturing on that, and the questions and the answers were very serious, and so this was the case at the luncheon too. The Soviets were hospitable to us in that sense, and I think wanted to deal with us in a professional way. So it was useful. And then we all flew to Tokyo, and Paul went on to Tokyo to brief the Japanese on this meeting, and I must say the Japanese were very interested in what we had to say, and what this was all about. The Americans getting together with the Soviets and talking about Japan, among other things. The Japanese Charge in Moscow was an old friend of Paul's and invited us out to an elaborate Japanese dinner and did all he could to pump us. Because our Embassy's administrative arrangements were so poor, it was this Japanese Charge who drove us all to the airport when we left. And he drove so slowly, so as to have the maximum time to pump us, that we nearly missed our plane. In fact, we had lost our reservations, and only with great trouble did we finally get on the flight to Tokyo.

So then Paul went on into Tokyo to brief the Japanese, and then came back to the United States. I went on to Manila, and then to Brunei, to Kuala Lumpur, to Singapore, to Bangkok, Jakarta, and back to Tokyo, briefing all of these governments on what we had said, to convince them, first of all that we were not doing anything behind their back,

Library of Congress

it wasn't a policymaking thing; to tell them what the Soviets said about them — in the Philippines they were interested in what the Soviets thought about Marcos, who was nearing the end of his days — and the Brunei people wanted to know what the Soviets thought about Vietnam, which Brunei faced across the South China Sea. For me, it was a pretty grueling trip, around the world and more, but it was very interesting and it was a good beginning. And of course it brought together attention to the Soviets and to Asia in a way that I had been trying to promote all along. And we had another such meeting the following year, which I attended, in Washington, which went also fairly well, although Paul had left by then. Now, there's one other thing I would like to mention.

Q: Before we leave this, so the mutual feeling about China — did the Soviets show much attention to other parts of Asia? Japan, the Philippines, and Vietnam, in particular.

DREXLER: Well, I can't remember anything notable about our discussions of those other countries, except that they were rather sarcastic about the Philippines and Marcos. But at the same time they were not extreme in their criticism of the Marcos government. I think they might have even entertained some prospects of fishing around there, and Marcos himself, as he became more and more desperate, was interested in a Soviet connection. I remember when I was briefing the Philippine authorities at the Foreign Ministry, their Foreign Minister walked in and sat down, to my surprise, because I was just an office director, and the Foreign Minister was not normally briefable by me. But he came, and he sat down, and Ramos was his name, I think. But he was very much interested in what the Soviets had to say about the Philippines, and I had to tell him, that it was sort of guarded, not critical. They didn't predict Marcos's downfall, and so on. And then at the end of the briefing the Foreign Minister told me that they would put out a press announcement about my visit, but they would not say that I had come from Moscow, but that I had come from the States to discuss regional problems, having to do with the bases, or whatnot. And I said, "Well, Mr. Minister, I have no instructions to agree to anything like that. I'll have to report this to Washington, and ask for instructions to agree to this sort of statement." But of course this was just a minor thing. But the Philippine Foreign Minister did not want it

Library of Congress

made public that they were having discussions with the United States about Philippine relations with the Soviet Union. They didn't want to attract attention to that. Exactly what they had in mind and what they wanted I couldn't say. Maybe they were trying to give Moscow an impression that the Philippines could develop its own ties with the USSR, without guidance from the US. The State Department, of course, refused to make such a statement. It was sort of strange. There was, in other words, at this time, some Soviet factor in this equation, as Marcos came to the end of his days. When he did actually fall, I happened to be the Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary, taking the place of John Monjo, who was in Manila at that time. I was mostly sitting up at his desk, and routinely signing off on things that passed me. But it was at the time of the real crunch, and we had set up a Philippine task force. This is one point that I want to make for future historians, because it is, I think, popularly thought that the Administration concluded that Marcos had to go, that Senator Lugar was instrumental in convincing President Marcos of this, and that we, without too much trouble, lined up behind the People Power, represented by Mrs. Aquino, who then supplanted Marcos. My own sense, from being in the Bureau front office at this time, was that the White House in particular, and certainly Donald Regan, the chief of staff, had the strongest reservations and concerns about Mrs. Aquino, who was regarded as at worst undependable and leftist, and at best a sort of incompetent woman, not capable of doing a man's job, as required by the situation. And this of course happened at a time when the White House and we all were very concerned about the Philippine insurgency, which was growing and posing a threat. My own feeling is that the White House preference, and to some extent that of the State Department, Shultz and so on, was for Marcos to be succeeded by a military government. I inferred this from messages which I saw going out to the field, but I think that in many cases this was communicated to our embassy by secure telephone. In the future, I think it would be interesting for scholars who might be interested, to look into the record of this period, as it is made possible through Freedom of Information and so on, to see what the real posture, aims, and objectives of the Administration were at this juncture. Because, as I said, I would not be surprised if further research reveals that we really would have liked to have

Library of Congress

had a military control under General Ramos, who of course was subsequently elected President. The Philippine military were close to our military, they were trained by us, they were anticommunist, they were a known quantity, and they could be depended upon to try to put down the insurgency, and they did not present any of the uncertainties or unknown qualities that they associated with Mrs. Aquino. I think that's what was the case.

I don't think there is anything else of that period that is of note. The refugee problem was a very severe one. We were dealing with the Bureau of Refugee Affairs, and also with the Special Assistant to the Secretary for Refugee Matters, whose name escapes me, a political appointee, who left the job about the time I left mine there. It was a struggle over numbers. We were pleading for permission to take in more and more Vietnamese people. We were trying to stop the horrendous atrocities that were being committed in the Gulf of Thailand by Thai pirates who were intercepting the boat people. And I went out and visited the refugee camps in Southeast Asia. I went into Cambodia and along the Thai border, and I saw these people and the appalling conditions under which they lived and were born, and in which they had to grow up. And we got pressure from the Malay, the Thai, and the Philippine governments to get these refugees out of their countries, to send them to the United States, and it was a very difficult proposition.

When I visited the huge camp in eastern Thailand, along the Cambodian border, I was escorted by an embassy officer, who I think was an intelligence officer, perhaps with the Defense Intelligence Agency, I didn't bother to query. And we went across the border into Cambodia, which we shouldn't have done. But we were out in the jungle area, and I remember driving across a sort of ditch, and down a dirt road. A man came along with an automatic rifle and stopped us. Our driver spoke to him in Thai, and he didn't understand, and we couldn't speak Cambodian. But somehow he knew enough English words, and he told us that we were in Cambodia. And I asked where was the border exactly, and he said it was just over that little rise in the road back there. So it turned out that my escort had arranged this, we didn't bother to ask permission or anything, and that he had arranged an interview with General Dien Del, who was one of the generals resisting the Khmer

Library of Congress

Rouge, and the Vietnamese in Cambodia. The resistance movement was divided. There were people on Sihanouk's side, there were the old Khmer forces that Sihanouk had overthrown, that is, the pro-American Lon Nol forces, and then there were the Khmer Rouge themselves, who were fighting the Vietnamese. It was a very muddled situation. This General was a noncommunist, and I guess his links were with Lon Nol, that he had fought unsuccessfully to defend Phnom Penh against the Khmer Rouge, and was now fighting the Vietnamese. So we went to his headquarters, at a camp, and he told us that we were within artillery range of the Vietnamese who were down the road, but that he had his scouts out, and that they never fired; that it was sort of gentlemen's truce, but this left us rather unnerved. And the general was drunk when I got there. I said afterwards that normally at diplomatic luncheons people are drunk as a result of the lunch. This was the first one I had been to where the host was drunk beforehand. And he showed us a map of the disposition of his forces, and so on. It was sort of a surrealistic affair. And then to my great relief, we left without any shots being fired at us. But a couple of weeks later, the camp we were in was overrun by the Vietnamese.

At that time, back in the Bureau, I tried to inaugurate a policymaking committee. That is, we would get together the office directors, and meet privately off the record with Paul once a week, to just throw around ideas about policy toward East Asia. He regarded it as a seminar, and he knew he could trust us to keep his confidence, and we knew we could trust him to say whatever was on his mind. And these were good sessions, and people hearing about them tried to get in, but we kept it closed. I had one session on Cambodia, and I remember advocating and getting support for the idea that we should leave the Vietnamese in control, that this was the best thing that could happen, and that Thailand could defend itself, and that the line could be drawn there. That the Vietnamese sphere of influence could be ended there. In response to people who said that Thailand would be next, I usually argued that the Thais always said this, but obviously didn't believe it, because the Thai army was always positioned around Bangkok, for the political purposes of its generals, and they were not deployed along the eastern border, where

Library of Congress

you would expect them, if they thought that the Vietnamese were going to come across. Anyway, I was very fearful of what was happening to Cambodia in those days. There was terrible famine and suffering from the war, millions killed by the Khmer Rouge. Fertility rates had dropped, with the population withering away in the camps, and some of us thought we were facing the extinction of Khmer civilization, that the war had to be brought to an end, and that it was better to bring it to an end under the Vietnamese and their puppet government, rather than to continue the conflict at such terrible expense to the Cambodians. So Paul listened to this, and one of his many virtues is that he is a careful listener. He can change his mind, he is not dogmatic, or ideological in his approach, and I was pleased to see him go on to be ambassador to Indonesia, and later Under Secretary of Defense for Policy.

So that concluded my active service. And then I spent four months at the Board of Examiners, again, as an ordinary examiner, until I retired.

Q: You retired when?

DREXLER: In September of 1987.

Q: Well, this has been fascinating.

DREXLER: I'd like to add one point. When I was in the East Asian Bureau, I attended two Chiefs of Mission conferences. These are annual affairs, where they bring together our ambassadors to all of the Asian posts, and the first one took place in Honolulu, at CINCPAC, the military command center of the Commander in Chief of the Pacific. And it was a very interesting session in the command center. All the ambassadors were there, but there was no one there from our mission in Taiwan, which at that time was headed by Harry Thayer, an old friend of mine. Instead, there was Harry's deputy. And I talked to him, and asked, "Is Harry ill or something, he couldn't make it?" He said, "No, he was not permitted to come." The EAP Bureau at the State Department would not let Harry Thayer come to the Chiefs of Mission conference because the Chinese Communists would object.

Library of Congress

We had this fiction, of course, that we don't have an embassy in Taipei, but instead an Interests Section, as the Nationalists do here in Washington. And Foreign Service officers staff it, but they nominally retire from the service, are hired by this group, and then when they finish their duty, they come back into the Service. It's a fiction understood by both sides, and it works neatly. Peking accommodates itself to it. But I never thought that we should have to go so far as to not let the head of our office there come to a top secret classified meeting at CINCPAC in Honolulu, a private meeting of our own. This particularly is, I think, wrongheaded because the head of our office in Taiwan wasn't just another chief of mission, like, if our ambassador to Burma was not there, it wouldn't be a terrible loss, because we didn't have that much interest in Burma then anyway, but Taiwan is a major trading partner, important politically in the region, and it was more important that our man in Taipei be there, than our man from Burma or New Zealand. But he wasn't. Not only did he have to be represented by a deputy, but the deputy was not even allowed to sit at the table in CINCPAC, which was reserved for ambassadors only. So he sat in the audience with the rest of us, which I thought was preposterous. So the next year, when they discussed arrangements for another chiefs of mission meeting, one that was going to be held in Washington, at the senior staff meeting, I said, "I have to be the only one, since Paul has left, who is in the Bureau now who was at last year's chiefs of mission meeting. And I want to tell you what happened regarding our man in Taiwan." I said that, "I think that this is really wrong, and to kowtow this way to Peking is quite unnecessary. If they protest, we just reject it, and they probably won't protest anyway, they may not even know. We are really only harming ourselves, and our discussions by keeping such a man away." Jim Lilley at that time was the Deputy Assistant Secretary for China, and an old friend from Hong Kong days, and he said, "I agree. We will let the representative from Taiwan sit at the table this time." But I believe they didn't let the number one man come even then. So this is an example of the eccentricities and the anomalies that one encounters where China is concerned. I think that is worthy of note.

Library of Congress

End of interview